

JUDAISM

Jewish and Indo-Tibetan Contacts

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Biblical Personalities

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The Evening *Shema*: A Study in Rabbinic Consolation

Carl M. Perkins

The Ritual and the Concept of *Havdalah*

Zvi A. Yehuda

Holding Fast to Integrity: Sholem Aleichem

Joseph Sherman

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JUDAISM

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In increasing measure, modern men are turning again to the quest for a worldview on the issues that are timeless — the meaning of life, the challenge of death, the purpose of suffering, the significance of the individual, his relation to society, and the goal of history. In order to advance this enterprise of spiritual discovery of our time this Journal has been projected. It will be primarily concerned with the philosophy, ethics, and religion of Judaism as a factor in the contemporary world . . .

We are committed to the proposition that Judaism has positive value today for Jews and for the world . . . At the same time, we disassociate ourselves from the dangerous tendency toward the hardening of party lines on the contemporary Jewish scene . . . The members of the Board of Editors belong to every school of Jewish life or to none. The trends popularly referred to as Orthodox, Conservatism, Reform, Reconstructionism, as well as others that as yet have no specific names, have their advocates among us, though no institution or movement is officially represented . . . Undoubtedly, our differences will find expression in these pages, but we shall be at one in opposing the dogmatism which takes for granted that one's own particular standpoint has a monopoly on truth and the authoritarianism which would suppress any contrary point of view.

Judaism will be dedicated to the quest for truth in the spirit of freedom. Our columns will be open to anyone who has something significant to say and the ability to say it well. New and unconventional interpretations, whatever their standpoint, will be welcomed from every source, for we share the conviction of the Talmud that "Both these and the others are the words of the living God." *From the introductory article by Robert Gordis, "Toward a Renaissance of Judaism" in Vol. I, No. 1.*

The First Reader

The Significance of Tevye

These days, when most people think of Tevye the Dairyman, they immediately begin to hum one of the songs from the popular musical about him. But Tevye is more than just a source of entertainment. His creator, Sholem Aleichem (né Shalom Rabinovich), used Tevye, and the stories about him, as a conduit for posing questions to, and about, God.

In “Holding Fast to Integrity: Sholem Rabinovich, Sholem Aleichem and Tevye the Dairyman,” *Joseph Sherman* looks seriously at a simple man asking serious questions.

David's Ethical(?) Will

The question mark in the caption is to point out that, in the words of the author, *Benjamin Edidin Scolnic*, “We should not judge David by our contemporary moral values . . . and standards. He was a man who understood God and life in a certain way, and he should be measured by how well he lived up to his own precepts.” We must, therefore, try to understand his concept of “blood” when we read of his instructions to kill Joab and Shimei. Ultimate order and peace in the reign of his son, King Solomon, were his goals. “David’s Final Testament: Morality or Expediency?” is a paper that reminds us that we must judge historical actions against the background of their own times.

Rabbinic Discussions and How They Are Reached

With what seems a strange answer, the Talmudic Rabbis who dealt with the question “[F]rom what time in the evening may the *Shema* be recited?” answered: “From the time when the priests enter [the Temple] to eat of their Heave offering. . .” The decision seems logical except for the fact that the Temple had been destroyed two centuries earlier and there were neither officiating priests nor Heave offerings in people’s lives. The rationale, as presented by *Carl M. Perkins*, is that by means of the many analyses of this question, which occur throughout Rabbinic literature, the desire was to keep alive the remembrance of the Temple, the hope that, some day in the future, it would be restored. In later discussions, they

4 : Judaism

ruled that the *Shema* be recited when the stars appear and that the recitation be in the Synagogue, an institution that replaced the Temple as a place to worship wherever Jews lived. "The Evening *Shema*: A Study in Rabbinic Consolation" is also a study of how religious practice can be related to contemporary life.

Isaac Knew All the Time

The conventional image that most people have of Isaac is that he was a fairly weak man — perhaps traumatised by his near-sacrifice — who, at the end of his years, was deceived by his managing wife and their wily son, Jacob, the younger of twins, to whom he gave the blessing of succession. Since Esau was the older of the sons, one would assume that the blessing should have gone to him. But that was not what Isaac intended; he knew exactly what he was doing. Like his father before him, he chose the son who was most worthy. In "Was Isaac Deceived?" *Joseph Rackman* presents a cogent argument for his point of view.

The Jews and the Tibetans

What possible connection could there be between those geographically distant peoples? Most of us who believe that travel is a modern phenomenon [certainly, easy and popular travel is] may be somewhat amazed and intrigued by "Contacts Between Jewish and Indo-Tibetan Civilizations Through the Ages", by *Nathan Katz*. The paper is full of intriguing details and bits of information which show that there are language similarities, that travel was possible both over land and by sea, and there was ongoing trade between Far East and Middle East as well as the West.

A Different Look at Moses

We rarely think of poets and dramatists as Biblical commentators, but that interesting combination was found in some of the works of the early 19th century German writer, Friedrich Schiller. He was a great admirer of Moses, and of the Jewish people in general, with whose struggle for freedom he had great empathy. Schiller saw Moses' great mission as the desire to deliver the people of Israel from bondage. In "Moses in the Light of Schiller," *Henry Regensteiner* casts his own light on the towering figure of *Moshe Rabbenu*, Moses our leader as well as our teacher.

Establishing a Relationship with God

As the author, *Ira F. Stone*, points out in his opening sentence, "[C]ontemporary Jewish religious life is suffering a crisis in worship." Do we believe in God? How do we relate to God? How do we worship God?

In "Worship and Redemption: Recovering Our Spiritual Vocabulary," the author finds the answer to those questions, and others of a sim-

ilar religious nature, in the *Amidah* prayer which he analyzes in great and perceptive detail. Worshipers who, until now, have not paid much attention to the significance of what they are saying, may discover a new dimension to their praying, while other readers of the article may be stimulated to think more clearly about where they stand, religiously.

Havdalah Means Distinction

At the close of the Sabbath and the festivals, a special benediction — the *Havdalah* — is recited. It marks the end of sacred time and the return to the secular aspects of life. It also makes reference to the distinction between light and darkness and Israel and the nations. There are other *havdalot* mentioned in the Torah — seven, in all — but only these three are referred to in the *Havdalah* ceremony, which, itself, is made distinctive, because there are blessings recited over wine, over spices and over light, as manifested in a special multi-wicked, braided candle.

Zvi A. Yehuda, in “The Ritual and the Concept of *Havdalah*,” presents a historical view of what is a beautiful ceremony.

The Book of Jonah as Literature

That famous fish story, which is read every year during the afternoon service of *Yom Kippur*, is a remarkable piece of writing. It is short — just a few chapters — it reads like science fiction and, withal, it is a prophetic statement involving a very reluctant prophet.

In this paper, *Paul Kahn* presents a literary discussion which helps to point up the ethical and moral problems posed in the text. “An Analysis of the *Book of Jonah*” proves the endless richness of this Biblical book, which can be read in a multitude of ways and always offers more challenges to the questing mind.

R.B.W.

We deeply mourn the passing of
Leo Pfeffer
 and
Nathan Rotenstreich
 who were both members of
 the Board of Contributing Editors

יהי זכרונם ברוך

Holding Fast to Integrity: Shalom Rabinovich, Sholem Aleichem and Tevye the Dairyman

JOSEPH SHERMAN

WRITTEN AS THEY WERE OVER A PERIOD OF twenty years, between 1894 and 1914, the nine stories and brief prologue which recount the life of Tevye the Dairyman have long been recognised as presenting a character who is simultaneously part and paradigm of that traditional Jewish life in Eastern Europe which was destroyed by violent socio-political and economic pressures at the turn of the last century. The concomitant tendency among today's general readers, both in the Diaspora and in Israel, is to regard these stories as period pieces, reflecting an ugly — and mercifully vanished — *goles* in which Jew-hatred was endured by Jew-helplessness. Hence, Tevye, while now accepted, like *lokshn*, as part of Jewish folk culture, tends to be treated with an affectionate condescension little better than contempt. *Haluzim*, *Irguniks* and Entebbe raiders have long since replaced him as modern Jewish role models, while the forceful Zionist thrust of modern Jewish education, with its glorification of aggressive independence and technological mastery, has impatiently discarded the Yiddish language and its literature. If Tevye is known at all by young people today, it is as Topol's caricature in the musical, *Fiddler on the Roof*. The literary standing of Tevye's creator, Shalom Rabinovich, has diminished proportionately. Popular taste now generally perceives him as an old-fashioned purveyor of *heymisher* jokes. He is rarely regarded as a serious thinker whose mastery of narrative techniques raises his work to the level achieved by Gogol and Chekhov, those Russian masters whom he most admired.

On the other hand, those who do recognise the writer's achievement perhaps weigh the balance too heavily on the other side. Among other giants, for instance, Tevye has been likened to Job, because, facing an increasing succession of personal tragedies, he questions God's justice. Like Job, he challenges Judaism's traditional answer to the problem of innocent suffering, which is steadfastly to maintain — as Job's comforters do — that undeserved punishment does not come upon the righteous. Affliction is always God's just retribution for sins, or a test of individual moral character, or simply an illusion created by the lim-

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itations of mortal perception. Tevye, however, like Job before him, refuses to accept this. Believing that God exists and is all-powerful, Tevye insists that He must also be all-just, and since, in Tevye's bitter personal experience, He is not, He owes man an explanation and man must demand it from Him.¹ So Tevye persists in seeking that which never comes. Of course, no real explanation ever comes to Job either: God's answer out of the whirlwind, by intensifying Job's awareness of his personal ignorance, enables him to renew that faith which he has always held, and gains him a double reward for his fidelity. For Tevye, however, there is neither tentative answer nor even half a reward. If, despite all the odds, Tevye continues to profess faith, it is because without such a profession hope dies, the meaning of Jewish existence vanishes, and the burden of Divine election becomes unbearable.

But behind Tevye and his interrogations of Divine Justice lies Tevye's creator, Shalom Rabinovich, who formulates the questions and forms the characters who ask them. Tevye may respond to his unanswered questions with resignation; we need not, nor did his creator necessarily intend that we should. In reading Tevye, it is a grave error to identify the character with his creator and, hence, to assume that Tevye speaks for Rabinovich. On the contrary, Rabinovich's fiction achieves its complexity through a carefully crafted narrative strategy which filters the garrulous monologues of a variety of Jewish persons to us through the *persona* of a fictional construct called Sholem Aleichem. This construct is either an ever-present listener through whose ears we hear what is being said, or he is a narrative voice who reports to us what has been said to him. In either case, the narrative is mediated in such a way as to place upon it a double or even a triple perspective. In this way, the questions which the narrative raises about itself tend to multiply alarmingly. We are continually challenged to ask: Who is saying this, and why? Who is reporting to us what is being said, and how reliable is this reporter? And, in any case, why are we always made to hear conversations at second- or third-hand anyway?

To illustrate the radically deconstructive effect of this kind of narrative strategy, it is worth pursuing a little further the tempting analogy between Tevye and Job. In defiance of his wife's despairing demand, "Dost thou still hold fast thine integrity? Blaspheme God and die" (Job 2:9), Job insists to the end on averring, "Till I die I will not put away mine integrity from me" (Job 27:5). So it may seem with Tevye. For him, as for Job, to blaspheme God may, indeed, be to die, for then the world, devoid of comprehensible meaning as it is for him, will then be devoid also of hope that it may not be so. But, for all their surface similarities, Tevye is not another Job. Good, generous, tender-hearted and conventionally pious he may be, but he has not so adamant a sense of his own moral integrity that he dares to demand an accounting from God Himself. Neither rich nor influential, neither profoundly learned

nor tormentedly deep-thinking, Tevye is not, as Job is, *ish tam v'yashar*, a man whole-hearted and upright. Rather, he is placed in a moral condition *vis-à-vis* Job to which we could apply one of his own favourite definitions: *bemokoym she'eyn ish iz a hering a fish*,² "in a place where there are no men [of moral stature], even a herring passes for fish." Tevye is someone like ourselves, not someone morally, intellectually and spiritually far above us. Thus, while Tevye's questions might be our own, the answers which satisfy him might not satisfy us. We, too, may find that there is no escape from the burden of Chosenness, but we may not find it easier to bear, as Tevye does, through patient acceptance of the formulations of traditional theology, endlessly repeated in the daily, weekly and yearly liturgy. Fully aware of this — indeed, determined to challenge us on this very ground — this is precisely the area from which Rabinovich selects his material for that sharp interrogation of tradition which he puts into Tevye's mouth.

Tevye's most characteristic and endearing habit is to quote repeatedly from the holy books for a variety of purposes. As his daughter Hava tells him impatiently, "*ayn antik! oyf altsding host du a posek!*" "It's beyond belief! You've got a verse for everything!"³ It is commonly recognised, of course, that Tevye's stock of knowledge is by no means as vast as he likes to pretend. Most of his quotations are drawn from sources with which every *shul*-going Jew is familiar — from the daily liturgy, the weekly *parshah*, the annual services for Festivals and High Holy Days, and from *Pirkei Avot*, the tractate of the Mishnah traditionally read on Sabbath afternoons in the summer and included in the *Siddur*. Tevye's knowledge of the Talmud and Commentaries, the *kleyne oysyes* ("little letters") that he venerates, is confined to a few rabbinical phrases which have passed into idiomatic daily speech. In a moment of necessity, in the presence of an *amoretz* (ignorant person) whom he wishes to deflate, Tevye has no hesitation in fabricating his own imaginary Talmudic quotation from an assortment of Russian and Yiddish words onto which he tacks Aramaic endings. The most resounding putdown of this type is one he concocts for his daughter Beylke's husband, the *nouveau-riche* vulgarian, Podhodzur — *miznavto de hazirto loy makhent shtraymilto, dos heyst* (i.e.), *fun a hazershn ek kon men keyn shtrayml nisht makhen*, "you can't make a *shtraymil* out of a pig's tail."⁴ Ironically, though, if we compare Tevye's humble ordinariness to the towering individuality of Job, this snub becomes an observation on Tevye himself. Such a devastating piece of fictional deconstruction is but one example of how carefully Rabinovich manipulates the multiple ironies essential to his purpose.

From the time of his first appearance, readers more learned than Tevye have hastened to point out his scholarly shortcomings, ultimately more to shine a spotlight on themselves than to illuminate the meaning of what Rabinovich is doing. Why, after all, does Tevye's creator — whose own knowledge was extensive — choose to limit himself only

to these areas of Jewish learning? It is quite valid to point to realistic characterisation as one reason. In the degree to which Tevye is a simple Jew, his sources of learning are simple as well. But this is not the only, nor even the chief reason. Rabinovich, through the mediation of Sholem Aleichem, aims chiefly to subject traditional Jewish teachings to a thoroughgoing examination of their validity. The most effective way to challenge the thinking of ordinary folk is to confront them with instantly-recognisable formulaic responses which, torn from familiar contexts and placed in unconventional ones, demand re-evaluation. The disintegrating situations in which Tevye finds himself cry out for answers to questions which Rabinovich wishes to ask. The quotations with which Tevye encounters them offer the stock responses of orthodox theology. But their incompleteness, inappropriateness or irrelevance merely accentuate their essential inadequacy. So, while both Tevye, the created, and Rabinovich, the creator, may “hold fast to integrity,” that integrity is by no means the same. The interrogation process that is instituted through the frequent repetition of texts, with which all of Tevye’s readers are familiar, is a process that simultaneously interrogates not only these traditional responses themselves, but our individual preparedness to accept them. Tevye may find his answer — or at least his consolation. Can we? Do we? Should we? These are finally the questions that Tevye’s recital of sorrows is designed to raise in us.

The way this process of interrogation operates is seen by examining one liturgical source of quotations to which Tevye most often has recourse — the *Hallel*, a prayer of praise made up of Psalms 113–118. In theory it is recited on festivals of jubilation. However, on several such occasions it is either omitted or not recited in full. On Purim, *kri’at ha’Megillah* takes its place; on Pesah, according to Midrashic tradition, God forbade His angels from rejoicing at the destruction of the Egyptians. Even on *Rosh Hodesh* (the beginning of the “New Month”) it is abridged.⁵ Though the chief intention of the *Hallel* is to thank God for His great mercies to His people, Israel, the relative infrequency of its full recitation might suggest to troubled minds that these mercies have seldom been unequivocally evident. The ordinary worshipper might be pardoned for finding it easier to remember when *Hallel* is *not* recited, than when it is. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that every time Tevye quotes from the *Hallel*, the effect of his quotation is to challenge the existence of the mercies that it celebrates in the everyday experience of ordinary folk like himself.

We first meet this kind of interrogation in “*Hayntiker Kinder*” (“Today’s Children”), the story of Tevye’s eldest daughter, Tsaytl.⁶ Returning from Boiberik, where he has just received the congratulations of the whole town on what he believes to be Tsaytl’s forthcoming marriage to the rich butcher, Leyzer-Volf, and slightly tipsy from the drinks he has bought all round to celebrate, Tevye joyously gives himself over

to song. Since Tevye's music is always taken from that of the synagogue, *Hallel* not only becomes an automatic choice but also provides an opportunity for serious reflection:

I look up there, into the heavens, but my thoughts are all muddled up down here, on the earth. "The heavens are the heavens," they are for God, but the Earth, it seems to me, He's given away to the children of men, so they should bang their heads against the wall, tear themselves to pieces like cats fighting for the cream, beating each other up for the prestige of sitting at the head of the synagogue, for the honour of being called up to the Reading of the Law . . . "The dead cannot praise the Lord," the dead understand afflictions, they understand how they ought to praise God for all the good things He does for them, but we, poor creatures, if we have one good day, we thank God and we praise God, and we say, "I love God" because He listens carefully to my voice and my prayer, He lends His ear to what I have to say. At the very moment when "I am encircled," I'm surrounded on all sides by poverty, trouble, miserable afflictions: one day a cow drops dead in broad daylight; another day a real stroke of luck brings to light a loose fish of a relative, a certain Menahem-Mendl from Yehupetz who grabs my last farthing, and I think "in my haste," enough already, the world has fallen in, "all men are deceitful," there's no truth in the world. What does God do? He puts it into Leyzer-Volf's head to take my Tsaytl; therefore, I say not once but twice, "I thank thee," I will praise you, dear Lord, because You've looked round and spotted Tevye and come to my help, so that at last I should have a bit of pleasure from my child ("*Hayntiker Kinder*," pp. 78–9).

Exactly at this moment, Tevye's horse breaks into a gallop, overturning the wagon, upsetting all the milk cans, and leaving Tevye flat on his back underneath it all. The situational irony explicitly reinforces the same spiritual irony to which Tevye had called attention earlier, in his disastrous encounter with Menahem-Mendl, through an interpretation of Proverbs 27:1: *al tis'haleyh beyoym mo'hor* — *a mentsh trakht un got lakht*, "a man plans and God laughs."⁷ Tsaytl's independence of spirit upsets all of her parents' carefully-laid plans and shatters their fondest dreams. She wants the poor tailor, Motl Komzoyl, not the rich butcher, Leyzer-Volf; she insists on marrying for love and not for money. Whatever thanks man may fleetingly imagine are due to God are ironically undercut by the consequences of human choice.

Tevye does not fail to recognise the irony inherent in the statement of Psalm 115:16–17: *hashomayim shomayim laShem, veho'orets nosan livney odom*, "The Heaven is the Lord's heaven, but the earth He has given to mankind." God sits in solitary glory in His heaven, leaving the world to the envy and strife bred by petty human ambition; *loy hameysim yehallelu Yoh*, "the dead cannot praise the Lord" — not because death has silenced their power of speech, but because, having experienced nothing but affliction, they can perceive no reason for gratitude. Only *anahnu*, we who are alive and can speak, must offer praise — for the irreconcilable disparity between the ideal and the real, between what we have been taught joyfully to anticipate, and what we are forced bit-

terly to endure. The only principle governing God's Providence that Tevye can perceive is that whirligig which he repeatedly defines as *oylim veyordim*: sudden and inexplicable ascent followed by equally sudden and even more inexplicable descent.

The context from which Tevye tears this conviction of the random operation of human life is, in orthodox terms, disturbingly deconstructive. The phrase is taken from Genesis 28, describing how, in a dream, Jacob beheld a ladder, *sulam muzav arzah, v'rosho magiya ha'shamayim, v'hiney malakhey Elohim olim veyordim*, a ladder "set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it" (Genesis 28:12). The angels perform God's will and sing His praises, assured of the beneficence of His purposes; they precede the appearance of God Himself to promise Jacob that *ha'arez asher atah shokhev aleha, lekha etnenah u'le'zarekha . . . ve'nivrekhu bekha kol-mishpekhoh ha'adamah u've'zarekha*, "The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed . . . And in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 28:13–24). These ancient promises can now only be taken on trust by Tevye and the Jews of his generation. In their daily experience they sound like a hollow mockery, because the comings and goings of men, unlike those of God's angels, are arbitrary and inconclusive, presumably the result of culpable individual choices. These, tradition insists, collectively add up to *avoy-noseynu harabim*, our many sins, on account of which we have been deprived of our homeland and punished with dispersion. But how are these "many sins" to be quantified in terms of God's justice? How can they justly be described as "sins" at all, born as they are of sociopolitical circumstances over which Jews as a people exercise no control whatever?

Intertwined with this question of free choice is obviously the more central question of God's plan for the world, specifically for the Chosen Jewish part of it. If Tsaytl, in choosing unwisely, brings poverty and hardship upon herself, her children and, ultimately, upon her father and mother, how can God be held responsible? Yet, if God, omniscient and omnipotent, rules over the world with justice and mercy, and is ever mindful of His promises to our forefathers, how are His purposes to be understood by those like Tevye, who suffer the consequences of that freedom of choice that God has granted to His creatures? How is Tevye to come to terms with Hodl's decision to follow Pertchik, the revolutionary, to the ends of the Russian earth, abandoning father and mother never to see them again? Scripture teaches one lesson, the experience of life another, and Tevye — like Job, but much more like each of us — cannot reconcile them. How must he cope with Hava's determination to convert and marry a Gentile? The only response he is able to make publicly — although his private feelings are different — is the one prescribed by *Halakhah*:

So I arrive home and find my Golde lying in bed, rolled up tightly like a black ball, and she has no more tears left to cry. So I call out to her, "Get up, my wife, and take off your shoes," I say, "and let's sit on the floor for the seven days of mourning, as God has commanded. 'The Lord gave and Lord has taken away' — we're not the first, we won't be the last..." I speak from my heart, and I feel the tears choking me, sticking like a bone in my throat. But Tevye's not a woman, Tevye can control himself! ... How could I control myself when I'd lost a child like that, alive and well? ... At one time we used to sit up whole nights over her; many times we called her back, literally called her back from death, breathed life back into her, as you breathe life into a tiny crushed chick, because, if God wishes, He calls the dead back to life, as we say in *Hallel*: "I shall not die, but live" — if you're not fated to die, you don't die ... In short, it's not for nothing that our holy books tell us, "Regardless of your will, you live" — a person doesn't take his own life. There's no wound in the world that doesn't heal, and there's no sorrow that you can't forget. What I mean is, you don't really forget, but what can you do? "Man is like the beast that perishes" — a person needs to toil, to drudge, to blacken his days and get torn to pieces for the sake of his bit of bread ("Hava," pp. 133–5).

In this moment of his most extreme anguish, Tevye turns to the palliatives offered by convention, and finds them far from soothing. On one of few occasions, he quotes directly the words of Job 1:21, which tradition and the Law have long incorporated into the Burial Service. Providing no answer, they merely demand acceptance. But though Tevye tries to be obedient, his questions break out more movingly here than elsewhere. He utters one of the consolations of the *Hallel* — *loy omus ki ehyeh*, "I shall not die but live" — but he significantly truncates the verse (Psalm 118:17). He concludes, not with its jubilant assertion, *ve'asapeyr ma'aseh Yah*, "[but live] to recount the deeds of the Lord," but rather with the numb fatalism of a mortally wounded creature, *az s'iz nit bashert shtarbn, shtarbt men nit*. "If one is not fated to die, one is forced to live on to endure even more of the unendurable." Tevye gropes for guidance among the most fatalistic observations of the rabbis — *be'al korkhekho atoh hay*, "regardless of your will, you live" (*Avot* 4:29), stumbling towards the bleak recognition that *odom kiveheymoh nidmeh*, "man is like the beasts that perish." Rabinovich once again makes Tevye truncate and reshape this quotation from Psalm 49:20. The original asserts that *adam bikar ve'lo yavin nimshal ka'behemot nidmu*, "man that lives in honour and does not understand is like the beasts that perish." Lacking both honour and understanding, all Tevye can now recognise is the similarity between dumb men and dumb beasts. The world view propagated by centuries of tradition is subjected here to one of its starkest and least comforting interrogations.

Questioning God's justice as he does, Tevye, it has been argued, should perceive that, unlike Job, he has to a large extent been the author of his own misfortunes.⁸ He himself brought Pertchik to his house and encouraged his visits. In doing so, however, he acted with the best in-

tentions and in fulfilment of the *mizvah* of hospitality. Does he receive the just reward such *mentshlekhhkayt* deserves? And how can Tevye be held responsible for the fact that Hava elopes with a Christian? Only after he has broken-heartedly rejected her appeal to speak with him does Tevye challenge the basis on which God has ordered the world:

What's the meaning of Jew and non-Jew? ... and why did God create Jews and non-Jews? ... and if God did create Jews and non-Jews, for what purpose should they be segregated one from another, and are not even allowed to look at one another, as if one was created by God, and the other was not? ("Hava," p. 138).

However much this interrogation may disregard Covenantal impositions attendant upon Divine Chosenness, every one of the countless times it recurs in the experience of individual Jews, it unambiguously calls to mind the very reason given in the Midrash for not reciting *Hallel* on Pesah. God's world, as Tevye encounters it, operates exclusively within the parameters of shattering irony.

Tevye's greatest wish — to have his daughters marry rich men and allow him to live in ease — is fulfilled when his youngest girl, Beylke, sacrifices herself to the boorish Podhodor. Yet, he finds her living in an emotionless void which, more concretely than the experiences of his other daughters, symbolizes the futility of all human aspirations:

Meanwhile a personage arrives in huge white gloves and says that the snack is already on the table, and all three of us get up, and we go into a room that's solid oak: the tables are oak, and the benches are oak, the walls are oak and the ceiling's oak, and everything's carved and varnished and painted and dolled up, and on the table — a feast for a king: tea and coffee and chocolate, with butter-pastries, and fine cognac, and the best pickled herring, and every other kind of eating pleasure, with so many different kinds of fruit that although I'm ashamed to admit it, I'm afraid my Beylke never even saw such things on her father's table. Well, they pour me a glass, and then another glass, and I drink good health to everyone, and I look over at her, at my Beylke, and I think, "Tevye's daughter, have you really lived to experience what we say in *Hallel*: "He raises the poor out of the dust" — when God helps a poor man — "he lifts the needy out of the dunghill" — so high that you can't even recognise him anymore. And I think — it's Beylke, and yet it's not Beylke ("Tevye Fort Keyen Erez Yisroel," p. 180).

For Tevye, the expectations encouraged by prescribed formulas detailing God's mercies are all realised in bitter reversal. Yet again, *Hallel* is subjected to critical reappraisal. The fulfilment of its assurance that God "raises the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the dunghill" (Psalm 113:7) transforms Beylke into a frozen study of unhappiness; it seeks to send Tevye to the Holy Land, not to fulfil a *mizveh*, but to prevent him from embarrassing his *parvenu* son-in-law. In Tevye's experience, what that assurance actually delivers is not what it appeared to promise.

If, Job-like, Tevye argues with God, Golde certainly does not play

the role of Job's wife. Her own sufferings from the consequences of her daughters' actions are even greater than Tevye's, since she has never shared those of his dreams which they act out. On the contrary, with feet planted firmly on the ground and rooted deep in reality, she opposes them with vehemence, only to be treated in return with patronising disparagement by her husband. In Tevye's often-repeated view, she is merely a *nekeyve*, a female, from whom nothing more can be expected. Consequently, she is made a double victim. Because she expects so much less from life, because she is preoccupied with domestic cares and lacks both time and capacity for philosophical introspection, she unquestioningly accepts conventional pieties as truths which are as much above challenge as they are unrelated to her day-to-day experience. She dumbly bears her burden, even when she is dying:

"So tell me," she says, "what've I got to live for in this world, when very soon I won't have child or chattel in the house? Why, even a cow, excuse the comparison," she says, "longs for her calf when you wean it away from her." . . . And while she was saying this to me, my Golde, she shed bitter tears. And I could see the poor woman pining away from day to day, going out like a candle, and I probably spoke my heart out to her for compassion, and I said this to her, "... We have," I said, "a great God, and a good God, and a mighty God." I said, "although in that respect," I said, "I wish I could have a blessing for every time the Master of the Universe... does such a piece of work for us that my enemies should only have a whole year of it." . . . But my wife, may she forgive me for saying so, was only a female, so all she says to me is, "It's a sin to speak like that, Tevye, . . . You shouldn't sin." "There you go again," I said. "Did I say anything wrong, then? . . . Did I do anything, perish the thought, against God's will? . . . If it comes to that, . . . if He created His little world so beautifully, . . . that children are not children, . . . and parents are no better than dirt under the feet, . . . I suppose He knew exactly what He was doing..." (Ibid., p. 169).

Behind this ambiguous exchange, Rabinovich interrogates the attitudes and values of both husband and wife. Golde is a *Yidene a proste, on hokhmes*, "a simple [Jewish] woman without deep thoughts," but her unquestioning acceptance not only leaves the ways of the world unchallenged — it perhaps even encourages them to get worse. At the same time, for all of Tevye's partly-informed challenge to God's justice, he can do as little as his wife to change the way things turn out. Moreover, his complaints against God hover only on the outskirts of defiance. In the face of God's rebuke, he backs down and backs away, muttering from behind the fence of conventional teaching which, however inadequate, is the only protection he has. It is chiefly to us, however, that Rabinovich has thrown the challenge, and we must meet it — or reject it — as our individual capacities permit.

In the penultimate chapter of his history, Tevye confronts the latter-day equivalent of God's command to Abraham: *lekh lekha me'ar-zekha umi'moladetekha umi'bet avikha el ha'arez asher areka*, "get thee out

of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee" (Genesis 12:1). Facing the dreadful reality of a pogrom, Tevye longs with all his heart for the immediate appearance of the Messiah; raising his eyes, he does, indeed, behold a white horse whose rider dismounts at his door. But this is another of God's little ironies: *az me kukt aroys oyf moshiah, kumt der oratnik*, "when one anticipates the messiah, the policeman arrives."⁹ Tevye's command comes not from God but from the Tsar: *for-for nakh Barditshev*, "fly away to Berdichev."¹⁰ Where is the fulfilment of God's promise now? In the face of human persecution and Divine absence, Tevye is helpless either to resist or to understand:

"What are we? What is our life?" — what am I today, and who am I? A half-man, a shattered vessel, a broken shard! For pity's sake, Master of the Universe, dear God! — I thought — Why have You deliberately picked on poor Tevye? For a change, why don't you play a trick or two on a Brodsky, for example, or on a Rothschild? Why doesn't someone teach *them* the Torah lesson, "Get thee out"? Wouldn't it have done them more good than me, I wonder? In the first place, they would've tasted the real flavour of what it means to be a Jew. In the second place, let them also see that we have a mighty God.... In short, it's all empty words. You can't argue things out with God, and you can't give Him any advice on how to run the world. If He says, "The heavens are Mine and the earth is Mine," — it's quite clear that He's the boss, and we have to follow Him. What He says, goes! ("Lekh Lekha," p. 212).

Defenceless, Tevye must accept what cannot be altered. So he "gets him out" to become a despoiled wanderer upon the face of the earth. We meet him chatting with Sholem Aleichem for the last time on a train, modern history's most enduring symbol of Jewish dispossession. Face to face in old age with a condition of permanent homelessness, Tevye can only take refuge in the pieties of orthodoxy which Rabinovich has by now rendered utterly platitudinous:

...as we say every day in the morning prayers — "Happy are they that dwell" — it's all good and well for those that can dwell.... "Happy art thou, O Israel" — it's lucky for me that I was born a Jew, because I know the taste of exile and of dragging myself around among all the nations of the earth, and of "sojourning and encamping" — wherever I spend the day, I don't spend the night, because on account of my sins they've taught me the Torah lesson, "Get thee out" ... Tevye doesn't ask any questions. They told him to get out — so he goes.... Today I've met up with you, Mr. Sholem Aleichem, on the train here — tomorrow it could carry us away to Yehupets. In a year's time it could dump us in Odessa, or in Warsaw, or even in America — unless the All-Highest were to look round Him and say: "You know what, children? I actually want to send the Messiah down to you!" Let's hope He does it for us just out of spite, that old Master of the Universe! Meanwhile keep well, travel safely, send regards to all our little Jews, and tell them out there that they shouldn't worry — our old God is still alive! ("Vekhalaklakoys," pp. 229–230).¹¹

These, the last words we hear Tevye speak, are far from comforting. His exclamation of seeming fidelity, "*unzer alter Got lebt*," coupled as it is with an encoded imprecation in the exclamation, "*der alter Reboyne Sheloylem!*" are whistlings in the wind. Jews are left wandering without meaning in a dispersion as unrelated to individual transgression as it is sundered from any sense of Providential mercy. If *goles* is a punishment for sins, how long must it take before these sins are atoned for? And if it is not, then how are we to reconcile what appears to be malicious caprice with orthodox teachings about Divine beneficence?

Rabinovich died in 1916, in the middle of the Great War. He was not to know that those interminable train journeys, on which Tevye finally joined the endless stream of Jewish scatterlings who babbled their lives away to Sholem Aleichem, would ultimately reach their destination in the Nazi death-camps. But the interrogations of orthodox pieties which he put into Tevye's mouth become, with a hindsight born of the appalling experience of our own times, even more pertinent today. Tevye sees all around him the erosion of traditional faith, custom, order, and meaning in Jewish existence and, believing unbelievably, he clings to them because there is no other spar in the wreckage around him.

To what shall we in the Diaspora cling today, when the trains have carried us neither to Berdichev nor to Odessa, but to Auschwitz? To the restored State of Israel, Zionists insist. For them, Tevye's world was passively complicit with the forces which murdered it. For the sins of Tevye's castrated people, the virility of those reborn has atoned. In 1991, in response to the seventy-fifth anniversary of Rabinovich's death, the Israeli novelist, David Grossman, could see no link binding Tevye's painful past to his own children's contented present:

When I was eight years old, my father gave me a set of books by Sholem Aleichem. It was his way of linking me to his childhood in Poland . . . In the heroic Israel of that day, I felt that I was the only one who knew that sad, vulnerable world. Now, I have a son who is a year older than I was when I was given Sholem Aleichem. It is strange that I never thought of giving it to him. I don't know how today my son could bridge the gap between his life and the wretched, passive *galut*.¹²

The well-fed, well-housed, thoroughly assimilated Diaspora concurs in the smug voice of the Canadian writer, Mordechai Richler:

I remember having Sholem Aleichem stories read aloud to me — mother read them to me. I enjoyed them. And — occasionally — they were read to her groups of ladies; that was part of growing up in Montreal in the early '40s. I myself, I've read him exclusively in English. He was enjoyable, but I haven't read his stories in a long time. It's part of a tradition. His stories came out of a different part of the world. It's part of our heritage, but not part of my experience.¹³

Richler might as easily have said the same about the Exodus. Such a comment may tell us something about this writer's personal indifference; it says nothing about the meaning of being Jewish today.

To those who seek such meaning, however, the interrogations of Rabinovich, informing each of Tevye's utterances, will not go away. They are not answered merely because the questions are no longer asked, either by unconcerned secularists or by obedient traditionalists. Predictably, only among the doctrinaire leaders of the latter is the force of Rabinovich's scrutiny fully perceived. In the ultra-Orthodox communities of Bnei Brak and Brooklyn, the only places where the Yiddish language is still alive in the mouths of contemporary Jews, there is no place for Rabinovich, Sholom Aleichem or Tevye. According to one instructor of girls in Bnei Brak, Yiddish has today replaced Hebrew as *loshn-koydesh* (the "holy tongue"). Therefore, it must purge itself of all inquiring matter:

Since the Emancipation, when Jews were allowed to participate in Gentile society, speaking Yiddish has become an ideology. It has been seen as a "fence" against assimilation, and in the Land of Israel as a way of "closing off" from the Zionists who were anti-religious. . . . It is felt that even those secular writers not openly opposed to *Yiddishkayt* belittle it, and can be more dangerous.¹⁴

Such Jews believe that they are holding fast to the integrity of their faith by excluding questions in favour of repeating pat answers. For these faithful, questions belittle and endanger a "*Yiddishkayt*" which knows nothing of doubt or diversity. Our Sages, by contrast, insisted that only through questions can truth be discovered; that an unexamined faith, like an unexamined life, is an exercise in vanity. This way was also the way of Rabinovich.

Today, a century after he began to write about Tevye, Rabinovich continues to hold fast to his own integrity, and to challenge ours by insisting, with Job, that it cannot consist of slavish adherence to uninvestigated dogma. To demonstrate that such interrogations are vital to the experience of us all, Rabinovich puts them in the mouth of a Jew like ourselves. There is, perhaps, greater depth in the fact that Tevye is a *milkhiker* than is commonly recognised. The English translation, "dairyman," accurate enough up to its limited point, is incapable of suggesting to the reader who is not Jewish the word's connotations in respect of the central distinction on which Jewish dietary laws are based — the separation of what is *milkhik* from what is *fleyshik*. In the context of these narratives, if we read this word not simply as a literal description of Tevye's vocation, but as a figurative description — a metaphor — of his avocation, then the distinction that Rabinovich is drawing between Tevye and Job immediately becomes both recognisable and resonant. In the profundity and perseverance of his search for truth, Job is a *fleyshiker*; in the humility and uncertainty of his doubts, Tevye is a *milkhiker*. The more he protests, in the moments of his greatest grief, that *Tevye iz nisht keyn Yidene* ("Tevye is not a [simple] Jewish woman"), the more we recognise that tenderness of heart which he

feels it is unbecoming to show in the artificial role that he is trying to play. The more we see through his unconvincing bluff, the more do his misgivings become our own. He may not articulate them with the *fleishiker* voice of Job, but his *milkhiker* spirit, however humble, is equally indomitable. Behind all his tentative interrogations, and supporting all his patient acceptance, we hear clearly the eternal human cry of incomprehension at undeserved suffering which, in challenging pious clichés, echoes in a poignantly minor key the majestic demand of Job:

*ke'da'atkhem yadati gam ani
lo nofel anohi mikem:
ulam ani el Shaddai adaber
vehokheyah el Eyl ehpaz.*
What ye know, do I know also;
I am not inferior to you.
Notwithstanding, I would speak to the Almighty,
And I desire to reason with God (Job 13).

NOTES

1. This argument is advanced by Hillel Halkin in the Introduction to his recent new English translation. See *Tevye the Dairyman and The Railroad Stories* (New York: Schocken, 1987), pp. xxiv-xxvii.

2. Tevye first makes this remark, "*vi di Gemore zagt*," "as the Gemara says," in "*Dos Groyse Gevins*" (1895), p. 31. All quotations from the Yiddish text are made from Sholem Aleichem, *Gants Tevye der Milkhiker*, Vol. 5 of *Ale Verk fun Sholem Aleykhem* (Vilne-Varshe: Farlag B. Kletskin, 1925). In my romanisation of Aleichem's Yiddish, I generally follow the YIVO system of morpho-phonemic transcription, which indicates pronunciation rather than the original Yiddish orthography. I transliterate Tevye's Hebrew quotations according to the Ashkenazi pronunciation of the Eastern Europe of his day; all other quotations in Hebrew are transliterated according to the Sephardi pronunciation in modern use.

3. "*Hava*" (1906), p. 125.

4. "*Tevye Fort Keyn Erez Yisroel*" (1909), p. 185.

5. See Phillip Birnbaum (ed.), *Daily Prayer Book*, 1949, pp. 565-574.

6. "*Hayntiker Kinder*" (1899), pp. 67-91. Page references to specific passages subsequently quoted are cited parenthetically after the text.

7. "*A Boydem*" (1899), p. 62.

8. This is what Hillel Halkin suggests in his Introduction, p. xxiii.

9. "*Lekh-Lekho*" (1914), p. 209.

10. *Ibid.*, (1914), p. 211.

11. "*Vekhlaklakoy's*" (1914-1916), pp. 223-230.

12. Quoted in the *Jerusalem Report*, 23 May 1991, p. 9.

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

David's Final Testament: Morality or Expediency?

BENJAMIN EDIDIN SCOLNIC

ONE CAN READ THE BIBLE AND MAKE IT SAY what one wants it to say, or one can attempt to understand what the text is trying to say. These days, deconstructive reading tells us that no one will ever have the definitive interpretation of a passage, but we can still try to learn what the text meant in the context of its times. Almost all religious readers of the Bible read themselves into the text, although most of them do not realize that they are doing so. They assume that these sacred texts, the foundation of the readers' faiths, are peaks of morality and spirituality. These readers are thus shocked if the God of the Bible does not act in accordance with their own sense of what God should do, and are embarrassed if the Biblical heroes do not act in ways that they would consider to be those of righteousness and truth. They stammer and make alibis for their heroes and try to make the problems disappear through clever interpretation.

I would like to demonstrate how this approach fails us. I do not believe that we can superimpose our morality on the conduct of the Biblical actors. Certainly, there will be no neat fit if we do. Neither God nor the heroes of the Bible will always or necessarily conform to our sense of things, nor need they.

As an example of the problems caused by the usual approach to thinking about Biblical morality, I will examine King David's last will and testament, his deathbed speech to his son and successor, Solomon. I will cite the text in sections, briefly providing necessary background as we proceed.

When David's life was drawing to a close, he instructed his son, Solomon, as follows: "I am going the way of all the earth; be strong and show yourself a man. Keep the charge of the Lord your God, walking in His ways and following His laws, His commandments, His rules, and His admonitions as recorded in the Teaching of Moses, in order that you may succeed in whatever you undertake and wherever you turn. Then the Lord will fulfill the promise that He made concerning me: "If your descendants are scrupulous in their conduct, and walk before Me faithfully, with all their heart and soul, your line on the throne of Israel shall never end!"

So far, so good. This is a lovely ethical will, filled with pious words

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and sentiments. If Solomon will live a religious, observant, moral life, he will be the fulfillment of God's promise to David, the righteous king of a peaceful and united kingdom.

If David's speech were to end here, we would be very happy. But it continues:

Further, you know what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me, what he did to the two commanders of Israel's forces, Abner son of Ner and Amasa son of Jether: He killed them, shedding blood of war in peacetime, staining the girdle of his loins and the sandals of his feet with blood of war. So act in accordance with your wisdom, and see that his white hair does not go down to *She'ol* in peace.

Joab is David's nephew, the son of David's sister, Zeruiah. He has been the commander of David's forces for decades. He has been loyal to David through good times and bad. Before he captured the enemy city of Rabbah, Joab brought David to the site so that the king could get the credit for the victory (II Sam. 12:26-31). When David pined for his son, Absalom, it was Joab who developed the emotional and legal logic to bring him home (II Sam. 14). It was Joab who arranged to have Uriah killed so that David could have Bathsheba (II Sam. 11), and it was Joab who saved David, and the kingdom, from the King's politically inappropriate emotional reaction to Absalom's death (II Sam. 19).

Joab is a key figure, perhaps *the* key figure, in David's kingdom. He is so powerful that David tries to reduce his strength by bringing Abner (II Sam. 3) and, later, Amasa (II Sam. 19), inside the circle of power. In both cases, the appointment of a new general would have had incredibly important political implications for the country. Abner's appointment would reunite the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel. Amasa had been Absalom's general, and his appointment would mean that the country was beyond the civil war and fully at peace. But Joab kills both of these rivals, and maintains his position. David's cry that "those men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too savage for me," referring to Joab and his two brothers, Abishai and Asahel, reflects David's feeling of powerlessness; David does not demote or punish Joab for these killings. Joab kills Abner at least partly in retribution for Abner's slaying (in self-defence) of Asahel, Joab's brother. But David, protesting his innocence in the affair, lest Israel think that he and his general had trapped Abner in a treacherous plot, detests the deed and sees it not as legitimate blood-feud revenge but as evil. David curses Joab, not once but twice:

May (the guilt) fall upon the head of Joab and all his father's house. May the house of Joab never be without suffering from a discharge or eruption, or a male who handles the spindle, or one slain by the sword, or one lacking bread....And today I am weak, even though anointed king; those men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too savage for me. May the Lord requite the wicked for their wickedness (II Sam. 3:29 and 39).

In spite of David's curses, unfortunately, God does not punish Joab at all, and, at the end of David's reign (II Sam. 20:23), Joab is still the key military man in the kingdom. Therefore, when the succession to the throne is up for grabs, Joab's alliance with Adoniah poses a great threat to Solomon. David instructs his son to kill Joab, ostensibly for his sins of the past, but, also, for Solomon's own protection. It is striking that what David could never bring himself to do, is left to Solomon to accomplish. David has been weak; he commands Solomon to be strong.

We might accept the command to kill Joab, based on what we have just reviewed, without much reservation. But, after a note of thanks to a friend, David's will continues with a morally problematic instruction:

But deal graciously with the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, for they befriended me when I fled from your brother Absalom; let them be among those that eat at your table. You must also deal with Shimei son of Gera, the Benjaminite from Bahurim. He insulted me outrageously when I was on my way to Mahanaim; but he came down to meet me at the Jordan, and I swore to him by the Lord; "I will not put you to the sword." So do not let him go unpunished; for you are a wise man and you will know how to deal with him and send his gray hair down to *She'ol* in blood.

These are David's last recorded words; the next verse tells us of his death.

Again, we will need background in order to understand what David is saying and why. Absalom, son of David, leads a revolution against David, and much of Israel sides with the son against the father. David is forced to flee from Jerusalem in complete humiliation. It is the lowest point in his life. On his way out of Jerusalem, he is befriended by Barzillai and cursed by Shimei, a member of King Saul's clan, who taunts David.

He threw stones at David and all of King David's courtiers, while all the troops and all the warriors were at his right and his left. And these are the insults he hurled: "Get out, get out, you criminal, you villain! The Lord is paying you back for all your crimes against the family of Saul, whose throne you seized. The Lord is handing over your throne to your son, Absalom; you are in trouble because you are a criminal!" (II Sam. 16:6-8).

Joab's brother Abishai wants to cut off Shimei's head on the spot, but David, out of either depression or piety, replies with his usual distancing of himself from such thoughts and actions ("What does this have to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah"), and states that God had told Shimei to say these words and that perhaps some day God would reward David for bearing the abuse.

When David returns to Jerusalem after his victory against Absalom's forces, Shimei flings himself before the king in penitence. Again Abishai wants to kill Shimei and again David separates himself from "the sons of Zeruiah" and their violence and swears not to kill Shimei.

That is the background to David's last instruction. Our last known words from David are the instructions to kill Shimei, the man who, we had thought, was forgiven. From a modern perspective, Shimei threw stones and did some name-calling, but he didn't break any bones; David had been right to forgive him and to stop Abishai from unjustifiable violence.

We are, therefore, shocked at David's last words. The assassination of Joab might have been politically necessary for Solomon, and Joab is a murderer many times over. But what is the necessity of finding a way to kill Shimei? Even if you throw Shimei's Saulide loyalties into the equation, David's instruction to his son to kill Shimei seems morally wanting.

Of Dread and "Blood"

Most conversations that I have with people about God relate to matters of life and death. "God took him," "Thank God I survived the operation," "God must have wanted it that way," are common expressions of the faith that God controls the processes of death. For Israelites in the Biblical period:

The "thou shalt not" gets its gravity, its weight, from "if not thou shalt die" . . . the sacred reveals itself as superhuman destruction of man . . . man fears the negativity of the transcendent . . . it is . . . from this wrath and terror, this deadly power of retribution, that the sacred gets its character of separateness.¹

The Israelites have dread of the impure, of defilement, and of God who would punish them for sins that have not been expiated.

Dread of the impure is like fear, but already it faces a threat which, beyond the threat of suffering and death, aims at a diminution of existence, a loss of the personal core of one's existence.²

Vengeance, for the Israelites, has an ethical aim. Vengeance is the demand for just punishment. The pain of that punishment, however, has a beginning and an end:

The very idea of vengeance conceals something else; to avenge is not only to destroy, but destroying to reestablish . . . That which had been established and which has now been destroyed is re-established. By negation, order reaffirms itself.³

Let us apply these thoughts to the seemingly problematic last will of King David.

David has had dread of God's punishment for many years. That is why he dramatically and explicitly attempts to clear himself and his house of any guilt in Joab's murder of Abner. He not only makes a wise political statement, but, more significantly, makes a statement out of his fear and dread of God's punishment. David does not want Abner's blood on his hands, but knows that, since Joab is the commander of

his army, he bears some ultimate responsibility for Joab's actions. David may curse Joab but he does not fire or demote or execute him. David lives with Joab and Joab's sins.

What Joab and, therefore, David have on their hands is "blood." If we can understand what this means, we can come to a more sophisticated view of David's instructions to his son.

"Blood" is the dangerous moral disease carried by people who commit unrighteous manslaughter. David was always concerned about going into "blood," as we see in the story of Abigail in I Sam. 25, in which David is deeply appreciative of Abigail's actions that spare David the necessity of finding Nabal's blood on his hands (vv.26 and 33). In the David story, and elsewhere in the Bible, a person who sheds innocent blood without reason has "the blood of the slain on his head" (Josh. 2:19; 2 Sam. 1:16, 16:8; I Kings 2:37; Jer. 26:15) and is a "shedder of pure blood" (I Sam. 19:5, 25:31; 2 Kings 21:16, 24:4) and "a man of blood;" to kill him is righteous. A fundamental Noahide law is: "One that spills human blood, his (or her) blood by another shall be spilled" (Gen. 9:6).

Once there is "blood," the act that caused it is like a persistent, dangerous disease, a poison, that not only remains with the person but can also spread to his whole family. Even when the "man of blood" dies, the poison is passed on and remains active in the lives of his descendants. Pedersen has written that these ideas have deep roots "in the whole of the Israelite conception of psychic life." A man who commits an act of "blood" finds that his soul is ruined. The germs of the disease are always with him.⁴

In our case, David feels threatened to the core of his personality by his association with, or complicity in, the "blood-guilt" of Joab. He may have been willing to live with Joab's "blood," but now, as he lies dying, he wants to provide the antidote to the poison that threatens Solomon and the Davidic dynasty. And so, David tells Solomon that he must execute Joab for the murders of Abner and Amasa. The command obviously has political nuances — Joab had backed Adoniah over Solomon. But the main reason to kill Joab is to protect Solomon from the poison of "blood." In the Septuagint's version of the dying king's instructions, David clearly expresses his co-responsibility when he says that Joab "put the blood of war upon *my* girdle and *my* sandal" (I Kings 2:5). When Solomon later commands his general, Benaiah, to execute Joab, the concept of "blood" is uppermost on his mind:

"Do as he said, and fall upon him, and bury him, *that you may take away the blood, which Joab shed without cause, from me and from my father's house.* And the Lord will return his blood upon his head, because he killed two men more righteous and better than he, and slew them with the sword and my father knew it not. . . . So shall their blood return upon the head of Joab, and upon the head of his seed forever, but unto David,

and unto his seed, and unto his house, and unto his throne, shall there be peace forever from the Lord" (emphasis added) (I Kings 2:31-233).

The "blood" of Joab's acts is cleansed from David's house once and for all time.

We can now better understand the reason to execute Shimei as well. Shimei had said:

"Come out, come out, you man of blood, you wicked man! The Lord has returned upon you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead you have reigned, and the Lord has delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom, thy son, and look, you are overtaken by evil, because you are a man of blood" (II Sam. 16:7-8).

To remove the "blood" from his house, David must destroy the person who brought it and the person who explicitly and publicly insisted that it was still there. Still, the last thing that David and Solomon want to do is to *confirm* Shimei's accusation by killing him without cause. They need a pretext so that his execution will have a legal/moral foundation. Solomon tells Shimei that he must remain in Jerusalem; if he crosses the Kidron, "know for certain that you will surely die; your blood shall be upon your own head." There is some inexact ironic justice in the idea that Shimei, who had scorned David's humiliating flight from Jerusalem, is confined to Jerusalem. David has to cross the Jordan to escape; Shimei is not allowed to cross the Kidron to escape. But, after a few years, Shimei does leave Jerusalem, giving Solomon justification for executing him. David has succeeded in killing Shimei without acting as a "man of blood."

We return to the ideas of dread and vengeance as explained above. David's dread of blood is the motivating factor in his instructions to Solomon. Shimei's taunts aim at a diminution of David's existence, a loss of the personal core of his existence. David's vengeance has an ethical purpose, to destroy only in order to re-establish the moral order of his life. Solomon cannot begin a reign with "blood" on his head, nor can he create a permanent order when the moral status of his own house is in question. "By negation, order reaffirms itself." The order that is re-established is crucial, not only for Israel's history, but also for its destiny, for the Messiah will come from the house of David.

David has a moral code, based on the ethical and theological system of his time, place, and people. David wants to restore the moral purity of his house under God. He dreads God's punishment, and wants to insure God's protection for his descendants.

It is our purpose not to provide an apology for David, but to make a point about how we read the Bible. As opposed to Midrash, which explains away any discrepancy between its moral code and that of its Biblical heroes, our approach is to see Biblical characters for what they are in the context of their own age. We should not judge David by our contemporary moral values, nor should we attempt to show that

he lived by our moral standards. He was a man who understood God and life in a certain way, and he should be measured by how well he lived up to his own precepts. Sometimes, as in the stories of his relationship with Bathsheba, he failed to live by what he knew to be virtuous. But he was a great man, and a great king, and he lives forever in our minds and in our tradition.

We do not have David's concept of "blood," so it is difficult for us to appreciate why he orders the deaths of Joab and Shimei. But we should not think of David's theological system as primitive or backwards. At least he sought purity and innocence. And, at the end of his life, he gave his family a legacy of order and stability. Sometimes one must use violence to achieve peace. This is a harsh reality that David's last will and testament presents for our ongoing consideration.

What David Did Not Say

David's instructions to Solomon are moral in the context of his time. His age also has a political code, one reflected in ancient Near Eastern royal historical writings of an apologetic nature,⁵ perhaps even essential for the institution of kingship to work. In these writings, the new king shows how unworthy his rival(s) or predecessor(s) were, and thus explains the necessity of his actions upon ascending the throne. As one reads these texts, with their many parallels to I Kings 1-2 (Divine election of the new king, the older son's insurrection against the old king/father, the queen-mother's key role in the selection of her son, etc.), one is struck by the fact that David does not mention the real threat to Solomon's rule, Adoniah. Adoniah attempted to seize power before David had even died, and many, including Joab, supported him. David has been told about Adoniah's disloyalty by Bathsheba and the prophet Nathan, so why does he leave out any reference to Solomon's key rival? There are two possibilities:

1. By instructing Solomon to execute Joab and to find a pretext to destroy the disloyal Shimei, David implies, through silent, *a priori* reasoning, that Solomon must kill Adoniah: If Solomon must kill these lesser figures, how much more so does he need to kill Adoniah. It is true that Shimei must be confined to Jerusalem so that he does not raise a rebellion among his fellow Saulides/Benjaminites, but Adoniah is a more immediate and powerful threat. Still, David cannot bring himself to utter the words to destroy his own son.

2. These are instructions based on a moral code. Notice that David does not condemn Joab for siding with Adoniah, but only for the murders of Abner and Amasa. After all, Adoniah is the older brother (with Amnon and Absalom now dead), and certainly has the strongest claim to the throne. The difference between the royal apologies of the ancient Near East and David's last testament is that the apologies are political

while the Biblical passage struggles to remain within a moral code. The first section of David's testament should not be seen as a series of pious clichés, but as a spiritual introduction to a passage that teaches Solomon about justice, about rewarding goodness and punishing evil. A purely political set of instructions would have commanded the killings on the basis of legalities accepted in that age and place, but David does not speak in these terms. And while the narrative of I Kings 1-2 has many parallels to the ancient apologies, David's speech itself is different. David, even with his last words, tries to tell Solomon something very important: Even political necessities must be seen in a moral context.

Does Solomon follow the second part of the testament? Yes, and then some. Not only does he kill Joab, and set up a situation in which Shimei will commit a capital crime, but he also kills Adoniah and banishes a disloyal priest.

At the beginning of his reign, Solomon follows the first part of the testament as well: He is loyal to God and builds a glorious Temple. But in the process of creating a great nation-state of international renown, Solomon forges alliances with neighboring powers and marries many foreign women, who eventually lead him to betray God and his father's legacy. Ultimately, politics, outside of the moral/religious context, will destroy Solomon and the structure of the United Kingdom. We can thus hear another message in David's last words that should be a lesson for our time as well: Even political necessity must be controlled by God's Word.

We have analyzed David's testament in the context of his time and place. At first glance, David seems no better than a vengeful gangster, seeking retribution on his enemies. After closer examination, we find that he acts with a strong sense of morality and justice. Although many of the particulars are now strange to us, we can find, in David's statements to Solomon, the same guiding principles with which we would have our modern leaders act as they attempt to deal with the problems of a troubled world.

NOTES

1. Paul Ricower, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston, 1967), p. 33.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Johs. Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture* (London, 1926), pp. 423-25.
5. See the analysis and references in Tomoo Ishida, "Adonijah the Son of Haggith and His Supporters: An Inquiry into Problems about History and Historiography," in *The Future of Biblical Studies*, edited by Richard Elliott Friedman and H.G.M. Williamson (Decatur, 1986), pp. 165-187.

The Evening Shema: A Study in Rabbinic Consolation

CARL M. PERKINS

Introduction

In a surreal fashion, Mishnah *Berakhot* 1:1 strongly links the appropriate time for the evening recitation of the *Shema* with seemingly contemporary rituals taking place in or around the (long-destroyed) Temple in Jerusalem. This rationally absurd yet emotionally meaningful link is weakened in the *Tosefta* (collection of Tannaitic, i.e., first and second century C.E. rabbinic material that supplements the Mishnah) and the *Yerushalmi* (the Palestinian Talmud) and is replaced in the *Bavli* (Babylonian Talmud) with a new link — between the Jews here on earth and God in the heavens ritually mourning for His children, because of whose sins He destroyed the Temple and sent them into exile. This is an example of a general phenomenon characterizing these rabbinic texts, namely, the evolution of the approach of the rabbis to the catastrophic loss of the Temple through the stages of denial, displacement, acceptance, and consolation.

The Mishnah

Mishnah *Berakhot* begins with a very practical question (“From what time in the evening may the *Shema* be recited?”¹) and an answer that surely must have been puzzling to its early-third-century listeners: “From the time when the priests enter [the Temple] to eat of their Heave-offering. . . .”² The Temple and, most likely, the sight of priests eating *terumah*, had long since disappeared from the scene.³ Yet, no effort is taken by the Mishnah to explain at what time of the day the priests supposedly engage in that activity.

The Mishnah then provides three answers to the question, “Until what time in the evening may the *Shema* be recited?” — answers which, like the question, strongly conjure up images from the Temple. Rabbi Eliezer’s, “to the end of the first watch,” is fairly obvious. All of the commentators agree that the watches referred to are Temple watches. Indeed, the only other time when the word *ashmura* occurs in the Mishnah, it clearly refers to Temple ritual.⁴ The answer of the Sages, *ḥazot*, is also tied to Temple ritual; as used in the Mishnah to mean “midnight,” *ḥazot*

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only applies to rites in the Temple.⁵ Finally, although Rabban Gamaliel's opinion (*alot amud hashahar*, "until the rise of the pillar of dawn") does not necessarily refer to Temple rites,⁶ the effort to harmonize this opinion with that of the Sages is supported by reference to two laws of cultic worship in the Temple: (1) the "duty of burning the fat pieces and the members [of the animal offerings];" and (2) the duty concerning offerings "that must be consumed 'the same day.'"⁷

Hence, it is very clear that the question of when to recite the *Shema* in the evening evokes for the editor of the Mishnah memories of the long-destroyed Temple. It is also clear that those who would consult the Mishnah to determine when they should recite the *Shema* in the evening would experience the same emotional response.

There are several ways to go about explaining these blatant references to Temple practice in *M. Berakhot* 1:1. If one accepts the thesis that R. Judah ha-Nasi, the editor of the Mishnah, simply collected earlier legal traditions without changing their language,⁸ one would say that the references to Temple practice here are fortuitous and therefore are not intended by the editor to convey meaning to the audience of the Mishnah.⁹ Were the (presumably strictly quoted) legal traditions to have referred to other phenomena, whether natural (e.g., "the appearance of the stars") or social (e.g., "the time when poor folk enter to eat their bread on *Shabbat* Eve"), the Mishnah would have so stated the law, without making reference to the Temple at all. According to this theory, one can say nothing regarding R. Judah's or his generation's attitude toward the loss of the Temple from its blatant intrusion into our mishnah. Indeed, the absence of Temple references elsewhere (say, in *M. Berakhot* 1:2) poses no quandry: here its mention was presumably part of the legal tradition; there it was not.

Alternatively, one could (as we shall) focus on the message which the Mishnah, through its selection and arrangement of material, conveys to its readers.¹⁰ This view presumes that many legal traditions were available to the editor of the Mishnah, and that he chose those which suited his purposes and carefully edited them to express his thesis. If Temple practices are mentioned here in *Berakhot* — a tractate which, from its title, content and place within the Mishnah, has nothing otherwise to do with the practices of the Temple cult — it must be for a particular reason. It must be that the recitation of the *Shema* is intended to be seen as harmonious with, as the continuation of, or as replacing, in some fashion, those Temple traditions.

Blithely referring in the present tense¹¹ to the long-gone priests, eating their long-gone *terumah* while discussing when one must recite the *Shema* in the evening, is plainly anachronistic,¹² yet it accomplishes several ends. First, it *denies* that the Temple has really been destroyed: one recites the *Shema* when the priests *are entering* [the Temple]. The inference is that the Temple still exists (or will again one day — but this latter possibility

is given no attention). Second, inasmuch as the Temple had, in fact, been destroyed, which was well known to the audience of the Mishnah, expressing the time frame for reciting the *Shema* in this way must have been consoling: even in the absence of the priests performing their duties in the Temple, there is something that all (adult, male) Jews can do: they can recite the *Shema* (which must have been a well-known ritual) at the same time that the priests were (or would have been) entering the Temple precincts. The implication is that one becomes like a priest in a state of ritual purity when one recites the *Shema* at this time.

A similar process occurs when one imagines observing any of the three opinions for the *terminus ad quem* for the recitation of the evening *Shema*. Although it is only implied by the syntax, the action is still part of the participial phrase beginning with, “from the time that the priests are entering. . . .” Hence, the Temple time frames are imagined to be current ones. These points in time, the end of the first watch, midnight, and the rising of the dawn, are all times by which certain sacrifices in the Temple had to have been completed. Hence, the recitation of the *Shema* becomes like a (lay, rather than priestly) Temple offering which must be offered (or completed) *b’zmanah* (in its required time).

Assuming, moreover, that the place of this mishnah in the work as a whole is not accidental but deliberate, the fact that this mishnah commences the first chapter of the first tractate of the first *sefer* (part) of the Mishnah is full of meaning: it reflects the intention of the editor to establish from the start the continuity and meaningfulness of Jewish life even in the absence of the Temple and its nightly rites and rituals (relating, as we have seen, both to purity and sacrifice) which had long since ceased to be performed by the priests. The recitation of the *Shema* in the evening by Jewish laymen is seen, according to this scheme, as the cornerstone of this effort¹³ — even more so than the daily recitation of the *tefillah*, which is explicitly tied to Temple worship only later.¹⁴

The Tosefta

The tone of the *Tosefta*’s presentation of the proper times for the recitation of the evening *Shema* is entirely different from that of the Mishnah. This difference is apparent immediately, when the *Tosefta* confronts the question of the earliest time for the recitation. True, the opinion found in our mishnah (“From the time when the priests enter¹⁵ [the Temple] to eat of the Heave-offering. . . .”), which makes specific reference to Temple practice, is brought, but only after another opinion, brought in the name of Rabbi Meir, which is parallel but strikingly different: “From the time when men enter [their homes] to eat their bread on Sabbath nights.” In R. Meir’s opinion, home replaces Temple, ordinary food (*pat*) replaces *terumah*, and ordinary people (*b’nei adam*) replace priests.

Whether these two opinions refer to the same time or to different

times, the contrast between them is enormous. The formulation of R. Meir (post-Bar Kokhba, i.e., post 135 C.E.) leaves the Temple behind: it focuses on a more practical social standard:¹⁶ if one knew what time one would go home (were it *Erev Shabbat*), one could begin to recite the *Shema* in the evening. This social standard, focusing on ordinary people and not exclusively on the aristocratic upper class, works even outside of Jerusalem, even in a world without a Temple, priests and *terumah*. One no longer needs the Temple (or its memories) to recite the evening *Shema*. In the words of Jacob Neusner (in a different context), "The system is made to depend upon the intention of ordinary people living commonplace lives."¹⁷

There is a second major difference between the *Tosefta* and the Mishnah. In the *Tosefta*, we see the presentation of an astronomical event to mark the social convention: the emergence of the stars (*zeit hakokhavim*). Whether this is an attempt to explain when "men enter [their homes] to eat their bread on Sabbath nights" or when "the priests enter [the Temple] to eat of their Heave-offering," or is an *asmakhtah* (a Biblical textual support) for the distinction between day and night,¹⁸ makes no difference thematically. In either case, we have a direct scriptural quotation (Nehemiah 4:15) giving us an actual time for the recitation of the evening *Shema*.

This actual time is quite significant. On the one hand, *zeit hakokhavim* represents the most universal standard possible. It is outside of the social realm and in the natural one. Unlike a standard such as "when one can distinguish between blue and white," which combines the social and the natural worlds, this one is wholly natural: the stars come out whether or not we are here or able to see them. Moreover, it is temporally universal: unlike priests and Temple which may come and go, the stars come out every night. And no one needs an expert to tell when the event occurs; every Jew can look up at the sky and see for himself, or reckon by calculation.

Understood in this way, *zeit hakokhavim* marks a further evolution in the process of coping with the loss of the Temple. Whereas in the Mishnah, we saw denial of the loss and yet, perhaps subconsciously, consolation, and in R. Meir's opinion we saw a turning away from the Temple and a focusing on ordinary Jews, here we have an even more neutral, practical phenomenon to which to relate the recitation of the *Shema* in the evening. The Temple recedes into the background; it no longer is the primary referent.

And yet, particularly if Ginzberg is right and *zeit hakokhavim* is meant to be a fragment of the source from Nehemiah, we have something quite surprising: a link to that time when, each day, Nehemiah's noble workers ceased their holy work of rebuilding the first Temple.¹⁹ What does this mean? Can it be that we have a deliberate link between the recitation of the evening *Shema* and the rebuilding of the (second) Temple? If so, then this, too, would mark an evolution in the rabbinic attitude: from denial

to acceptance that the second Temple was destroyed and the accompanying hope that it may once again be rebuilt as was the first. Following this logic, by reciting *Shema* one is linking oneself to the only previous Temple rebuilders the Jews have known; hence one becomes like them.

A third difference between the Mishnah and the *Tosefta* is the absence in the latter of any discussion of the *terminus ad quem* for the recitation of the evening *Shema*. Perhaps this is because in the source from Nehemiah we have our answer: *alot hashahar* (the break of day). Whether or not this is so, we again see the Temple moving from center stage. No more talk of watches, of midnight, of fatty pieces burning on the altar; at most we have a clear, universal astronomical standard which no longer relies on a reality which is no more. On the other hand, if, indeed, *alot hashahar*, like *zeit hakokhavim*, is meant to remind us of the rebuilding of the first Temple, then we simultaneously (a) recognize the loss of the second Temple; and (b) realize that, just like the first, perhaps it, too, will one day be rebuilt.

The Yerushalmi

In the four and one-half folio columns of the Venice edition of the *Yerushalmi* devoted to our mishnah (*Berakhot* 1:1), little attention is paid to Temple ritual. In presenting the view of the Mishnah regarding the earliest time for the commencement of the recitation of the *Shema* in the evening (“the time when the priests enter [the Temple] to eat of their Heave-offering”), the *Yerushalmi* immediately gives the view (in the name of R. Hiyya) which we saw in the *Tosefta*: “the time when men enter [their homes] to eat their bread on Sabbath nights.” The *Yerushalmi* then immediately asserts that the two are almost identical. Admittedly, there is an objection to this assertion, but it is quickly resolved. With the equivalence of the two standards, the importance of the Temple and its cult has instantly diminished.

Surprisingly, given that it is the focus of the Mishnah, the question of when to recite the *Shema* in the evening gets little attention. The bulk of the *Yerushalmi*’s discussion of this question focuses on the terms *zeit hakokhavim* and *bein ha-shmashot* (“when the stars appear,” and “between day and night,” an important temporal concept in Jewish law). When do they occur? How long do they last? But these do not appear to be related directly to the practice of reciting *Shema* in the evening. (Several of these passages also appear in the *Bavli* — in *Shabbat* and *Megillah* — where they more closely relate to the question at hand.) In any event, the proper time for the recitation, when it is discussed, no longer evokes the Temple ritual.²⁰

Instead, as the question of the proper time for the recitation recedes in importance, the question of *where* to recite the *Shema* in the evening gets more attention. One might have thought that, as the image of the priests

returning to the Temple (or to their homes) to eat their *terumah* has disappeared, the synagogue would take the place of the Temple. What is fascinating (particularly in the light of the previously quoted *baraita* [Tannaitic source not codified in the Mishnah]) is that, on the contrary, the status of reciting the *Shema* in the synagogue in the evening is called into question:

Amar R. Yosi: Ein koreen otah b'veit ha-kneset bishvil lazeit y'dei hovato, elah kdei la'amod b'tefila mitokh davar shel Torah [2a; see also 2d] (The reciting of the *Shema* during the evening service in synagogue is not for the purpose of discharging one's obligation to recite it, but to recite a portion of the Torah prior to standing for the *Amidah*).

In other words, while one may recite the *Shema* at the time that the late afternoon/evening service is customarily held in the synagogue, this recitation does not fulfill the obligation which is the subject of the law in our mishnah.

Rather, it is the *home* — picking up on R. Hiyya's (or R. Meir's) standard — which is the proper place to recite the *Shema* in the evening. The most vivid image in the discussion is of Jews reciting *Shema* in their beds at night to ward off demons:

Rabbi Huna in the name of Rabbi Joseph said: "Why did they [the Sages] say that one must read the *Shema* in his house in the evening? In order to ward off the forces that can harm him. And what is the [Scriptural] reason? [Because it is written:] "Say in your hearts when you are about to go to sleep, and be still, *Selah!*" (Psalms 4:5)[2d].

In sum, the *Yerushalmi* equates Temple time with home time, prefers the latter, and, in so doing, allows the significance of the Temple to recede. If the first stage (that of the Mishnah) is to imagine that things really haven't changed, that by reciting the *Shema* one becomes like a priest entering the Temple to eat one's *terumah*; and the second stage, that of the *Tosefta*, is to have two alternatives, that of the Temple and that of the home; then the third stage, that of the *Yerushalmi*, is perfunctorily to equate the two and to focus, realistically, on home time as the measure to live by. One might have expected the social institution of the synagogue to take on the place of the Temple in the life of Palestinian Jewry, but if this occurred, it did not do so in this regard. When the *Shema* is recited in synagogues in the evening, it is only for Scriptural "atmosphere," not to fulfill a religious obligation.

The Bavli

In the *Bavli*, it is no longer clear why there is such a strong, impractical connection of the *Shema* to obsolete Temple ritual in the formulation of the Mishnah:

When do the priests eat *terumah*?
From the time of the appearance of the stars.
Let him then say:

“From the time of the appearance of the stars”! [2a]²¹

What follows is a tortuous effort of sifting through the many opinions concerning the earliest time to recite the *Shema* in the evening. The resolution? *zeit hakokhavim*.

Again, concerning the “watches” of the night, we see the same impatient insistence on clarity, from a generation and a community for whom the Temple is no longer a daily reality:

“Until the end of the first watch.”

What opinion does R. Eliezer hold?

If he holds that the night has three watches, let him say:

Until four hours [in the night].

And if he holds that the night has four watches, let him say: Until three hours! [3a]

Here, however, once the halakhic question has been resolved, a long series of *aggadot* follow which make clear that yet a new stage in coping with the loss of the Temple has been reached. These *aggadot* are epitomized by the following:

R. Isaac b. Samuel says in the name of Rab: The night has three watches, and at each watch the Holy One, blessed be He, sits and roars like a lion and says: “Woe to the children, on account of whose sins I destroyed My house and burned My Temple and exiled them among the nations of the world.” [3a]

The Temple may no longer be a part of the everyday reality of the Jew, but it remains a vital element in the theology of the rabbis. Now, finally, hundreds of years after the destruction, we see a full-blown attempt to cope with the loss. We see, in the *aggadah* above, a simple explanation for the tragedy and, simultaneously, the depiction of an empathetic Divine response to it. It appears that we, the Jews, were to blame, but that God cares for us nonetheless.

But this is not the whole picture. There is a psychological complexity to the *Bavli*’s discussion. Many of the emotions which we would expect the rabbis to be expressing are projected onto God. For example, although anger is a typical stage in responding to a loss, nowhere do we see the rabbis expressing anger at God directly. Yet, in a curious example of what appears to be a reaction formation, God is depicted [7a] as being angry with the Jews — though only for an instant (as long as the length of *bein hashmashot* in the *Yerushalmi*). Indeed, God has difficulty controlling His anger; He prays (as we pray) that His “mercy may suppress [His] anger.” In a frightening depiction of God, we are told that he spared us by refraining from becoming angry in the days of Balaam. “For had I been angry, not one remnant would have been left” of the “enemies of Israel” [i.e., in euphemistic terms that are often used in the Talmud, Israel itself]. [7a] And if it is not anger, why else could God have brought down such misery upon us? The answer is love, whence comes that concept which seems almost self-contradictory: *yisurei ahavah* (chastisements of love).

God's activities reflect our own. We have already seen that God roared like a lion and says, "Woe to the children..." We are told that three times a day (paralleling the three statutory prayer services which, later in the *Bavli*, are understood to reflect Temple ritual), when Jews go into synagogues and schoolhouses and respond: "May His great name be blessed!" the Holy One, blessed be He, shakes His head and [in a split response to the tragedy] says: "Happy is the king who is thus praised in this house! Woe to the father who had to banish his children..."[3a]

As in the *Yerushalmi*, there is much greater attention paid in the *Bavli* to the proper *place* for the recitation of the *Shema* than there is to the proper time. But, in striking contrast to the *Yerushalmi*, the synagogue has become a holy place; among other things, it has become the proper place to recite the evening *Shema*: "A man should, when returning home from the field in the evening, go to the synagogue... recite the *Shema* and say the *Tefillah*." [4b] When the statement of R. Joshua b. Levi appears ("Though a man has recited the *Shema* in the synagogue, it is a religious act to recite it again upon his bed"), it is followed by a limitation by R. Nahman: "If he is a scholar, then it is not necessary." [4b-5a] There is no statement, parallel to that in the *Yerushalmi*, to the effect that recitation of the *Shema* in synagogue during the evening service does not fulfill one's religious obligation. True, there are statements lauding the recitation of the *Shema* on one's bed: "If one recites the *Shema* upon his bed, the demons keep away from him." [5a] "R. Isaac says: if one recites the *Shema* upon his bed, it is as though he held a two-edged sword in his hand." [5a] But the synagogue is the best place of all: "Abba Benjamin says: A person's prayer is heard [by God] only in the Synagogue." [6a] "R. Yohanan says: Whenever the Holy One, blessed be He, comes into a synagogue and does not find ten persons there, He becomes angry at once." [6b] "Resh Lakish said: Whosoever has a synagogue in his town and does not go there in order to pray, is called an evil neighbour... And more than that, he brings exile upon himself and his children." [8a]

In sum, the *Bavli* is fully aware of the loss of the Temple and, of all the texts we have examined, deals most effectively and dramatically with it. God — Who expresses the emotions which the rabbis must be feeling themselves — is seen to be, alternately, angry, sad and loving. He weeps for the Jews and their loss, and offers various forms of consolation. For one, by linking the destruction of the Temple to the sins of the people, there is, at the very least, an explanation for the otherwise unfathomable loss. We are also told that consolation can be sought in fellowship: ten men in a synagogue is better (for the community and God's relationship to it) than ten men in their homes each worried about demons. Finally, and very subtly, attention is paid to the development of the synagogue as a holy place. Without calling it a *mikdash mi'at* (a Temple in miniature) or in any way alluding to it as a substitute for the Temple, by virtue of its

becoming the place where Jews are expected to congregate three times a day, it takes on some of the attributes of the Temple.

Conclusions

From the year 70 until the final redaction of the Babylonian Talmud some 500 years later, the Jewish people went through several stages of coping with the loss of the Temple, stages which are reflected in the rabbinic literary texts we have examined: the Mishnah, the *Tosefta*, the *Yerushalmi* and the *Bavli*. In the rabbinic treatment of the proper time for the recitation of the *Shema* in the evening, we have seen the following: denial of the loss of the Temple; a growing awareness that it really is gone and that knowledge of its nightly rites and rituals can no longer be presumed of the Jewish community; hopes that it may one day be rebuilt as was the first Temple; a growing focus on a natural point in time (*zeit hakokhavim*), as opposed to social conventions; and, finally, a search for the appropriate place to recite the *Shema* in the evening, which becomes, in the *Bavli*, the synagogue. Ordinary people have replaced priests, the synagogue has replaced the Temple, and God — who in the Mishnah, *Tosefta*, and *Yerushalmi*, is silent — roars like a lion on behalf of His people.

NOTES

1. This and other translations of passages from the Mishnah are based on those of Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford, 1933). (Danby's footnotes omitted).

2. Note that the Mishnah does not explicitly mention the Temple. H. Albeck, *Shishah Sidrei Mishnah* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1975), Vol. I (*Zera'im*), p. 326, argues that this interpolation (by Danby and others) is false; instead, the priests are entering "their houses." Resolving this ambiguity is not central to my analysis.

3. Albeck, *Op. cit.* and L. Ginzberg, *A Commentary on the Palestinian Talmud* (N.Y.: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1941), p. 7, discuss the possibility that *all* priests (not just those who were impure) as well as non-priests observing the priestly rules of purity, would bathe regularly at sun-down, even *after* the destruction of the Temple. But H. Albeck believes that, after the destruction, this no longer (publically) took place. Thus, he explains the shift in language which takes place when this opinion is quoted in the *Tosefta* (from *nikhnasin* to *Zaca'in le'ekhol bi'trumatan*).

4. *Yoma* 1:8. The passage is similar to ours in another respect, namely, that *sof hashmura ha-rishonah* and *hazot* are juxtaposed as alternate times for the same ritual to occur.

5. See, e.g., *Zevahim* 5:3,6,8; 6:1; 9:6.

6. The only other occurrences of *amud ha-shaḥar* in the Mishnah are at *Meg.* 2:4 and *Parah* 12:11.

7. Cf. *M. Megillah* 2:6 and *M. Zevahim* 5:8.

8. Albeck, *Op. cit.*, p. 102.

9. Note, however, that this theory does leave open the possibility that, although the editor of the Mishnah may not have done so, the purported authors of the legal traditions which allude to Temple ritual (R. Eliezer, the Sages and R. Gamaliel, late first and early second century) were themselves self-consciously linking the recitation of the *Shema* with Temple practice.

10. For the purposes of this paper, we shall similarly view the *Tosefta*, the *Yerushalmi* and the *Bavli*.

11. That is, with the Hebrew participial form of the answer matching that of the question: “*me-ematai koreen . . . ?*” “*Bi-zman she-ha-kohanim nikhnasin . . .*”

12. Although anachronisms abound in the Mishnah, questions concerning the time frame during which *mizvot* may or must be recited are not usually answered with such a heavy emphasis on Temple practice. See, for example, the answers to the question in *M. Ber.* 1:2: “From what time in the morning may the *Shema* be recited?” But see *M. Megillah* 1:1, which makes reference to *arim mukafot homah miyemot Yehoshua bin Nun* (cities surrounded by walls since Joshua’s time), a category which includes the city of Jerusalem.

13. It is unclear to me why, in *M. Berakhot*, only the evening and not the morning recitation of the *Shema* is so strongly linked to Temple worship. The answer may be related to the fact that the Mishnah elsewhere explicitly links the morning recitation with Temple worship. In *M. Tamid* 4:3 and 5:1, the recitation of the morning *Shema* and the Ten Commandments is set in the midst of the ritual of the morning *Tamid* offering. The contrast between *Tamid* and *Berakhot* is, however, striking. In *Tamid*, it appears to be the priests who recite the *Shema* and the Ten Commandments. The people join in only to recite the blessings following the recitation. What in *Berakhot* is an act to be performed by all Jews — *zekher la-Mikdash* (in remembrance of the Temple) as it were — is, in *Tamid*, a cultic act performed only by priests in a state of ritual purity.

14. See *Tos. Ber.* 3:2; *B. Ber.* 26b.

15. In the *Tosefta*, *nikhnasin* (they enter) is replaced by *zaca’in* (they are privileged); see Lieberman, *Tosefta Kifshuta, Berakhot*, p.1., s.v. *zaca’in*; see also n.3 above.

16. Assuming, of course, that most Jews observed *Shabbat*, which is as plausible as Lieberman and Albeck’s suggestion that the people knew when the priests entered to eat their *terumah*. See Lieberman, p. 1 and H. Albeck, p. 326.

17. B. Bokser, “Ma’al and Blessings over Food,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 100 (1981): 571, citing Neusner.

18. See Louis Ginzburg, *Commentary on the Palestinian Talmud*, 1, p.13.

19. The verse also provides us with a connection between Rabban Gamaliel’s opinion of the *terminus ad quem* for the evening recitation and the time when the work commenced: “. . . *alot hashahar*.”

20. The various opinions for the latest time that one can recite the *Shema* are likewise treated not as references to Temple ritual, but as opportunities to expound on other topics. The barest fragment of the passage relates to Temple practice (3a).

21. English translations from the *Bavli* are based on those found in the Soncino translation of the Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot*.

Was Isaac Deceived?

JOSEPH RACKMAN

THE STORY OF ISAAC BLESSING HIS TWIN sons, Jacob and Esau, is replete with problems. Isaac intends to bless his eldest son, Esau, but Jacob (the younger of the two) engages in a successful deception and obtains the blessing intended for Esau. Jacob suffered for his deception, and himself was the victim of deceptions — a just retribution. However, the story of the blessing of Jacob and Esau is troublesome. The biggest question is whether a blessing can be stolen. If Jacob had stolen his father's sheep, by law the sheep would not have belonged to Jacob. Therefore, it must be asked whether a father's blessing, especially a spiritual/moral one, can be stolen. Additionally, Isaac's wife, Rebecca, favors her younger child, Jacob, and encourages him into undertaking the deception. What was the underlying cause of the dispute between the spouses? Why did Isaac favor Esau, and Rebecca favor Jacob? The answers to these questions are in the text.

Isaac Intended All Along to Bless Jacob

In this story, Isaac gives three blessings. First, he blesses Jacob, though he thinks that it is Esau in front of him (Genesis 27:28-29). The second blessing is given after Jacob has left, and Esau comes with the meal for his father (Genesis 27:39-40). Both Isaac and Esau are upset that Jacob has obtained a blessing by deceit, and Esau then demands from his father a blessing, which is given. Afterwards, Esau announces that he will kill Jacob after Isaac dies. Rebecca goes to Isaac and tells him that she wishes Jacob to return to the home country in Mesopotamia (where she had been born and where Isaac's father had been born), and for Jacob to find a wife from there. Out of consideration for Isaac's feelings, she does not tell him of Esau's deadly intentions towards his brother. Isaac asks for Jacob to come to him in order to give Jacob another blessing before he leaves (Genesis 28:3-4). This will be the first time that Isaac has Jacob in front of him with Isaac knowing that it *is* Jacob in front of him.

As noted at the outset, this story poses serious problems. We must question what appears to be the attitude of the text towards the stealing of the blessing by Jacob. The text seems to have a strictly formalistic conception of law in which a deception is considered operative. It is

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difficult to believe that the deception by Jacob can affect who will receive Isaac's blessing. It does not seem right that a blessing obtained by Jacob through deceit should be valid. This is especially true when one considers what is at stake. The blessing at issue is the right to be God's representative on earth. Who will bear His banner? Can it really be that this moral right can be obtained by stealth?

A review of the three blessings that were given is instructive. The first is given when Isaac believes that he has Esau in front of him, although it is really Jacob. *The blessing that is given is a materialistic one:* "May God grant you the dew of heaven and the fat of the earth, much grain and wine. Nations will serve you and governments will bow down to you" (Genesis 27:28-29). The second blessing is given by Isaac to Esau, with Isaac knowing that it is truly Esau in front of him, and again the blessing is one of materialism: "the fat places of the earth can still be your dwelling and [you can still have] the dew of heaven." (The problem that Esau will face, however, is that he will "live by the sword and you [Esau] will have to serve your brother") (Genesis 27:39-40). Both blessings deal with wealth.

It is the third blessing which reveals that Isaac truly understood the difference between his two sons, and intended that Jacob be his spiritual heir. The scene opens after Esau has received his blessing, but is furious that Jacob had sneaked in ahead of him to steal the blessing (Genesis 27:41). Thereafter, in chapter 28, *for the first time*, Jacob appears before Isaac with Isaac knowing that it is Jacob before him, and Isaac's blessing is for him to "become an assembly of peoples. He [God] will grant Abraham's blessing to you and your descendants, so that you will take over the land which God gave to Abraham" (Genesis 28:3-4). Here, what is transmitted for the first time, is Isaac's *spiritual* legacy from Abraham, now clearly intended for Jacob.

Additional textual support for this approach is found immediately before the second blessing by Isaac. Esau is pleading with his father, and asking whether there is a blessing left over for him. Isaac's response, that "your brother came with deceit and took your blessing," refers to the *materialistic* blessing. Isaac comes up with a half-hearted formulation and promises Esau the "fat places of the earth," but the bad news is that he shall "live by the sword" (verses 39 and 40). Yet, there was a blessing remaining, of a different nature, the one Jacob will receive from Isaac ten verses later, Abraham's blessing. This, however, is not to go to Esau, but only to Jacob. All along it had been Isaac's intention to give this blessing to Jacob a little later.

Isaac's Game Plan

It appears that the entire scene involving the three blessings plays itself out over a very brief period of time, as little as only one morning.

It would seem, from the approach we are discussing, that before the deception by Jacob, Isaac's plan was to give Esau the materialistic blessing and a few days later to give Jacob the spiritual blessing. While Isaac was old, he did not believe that he was on his death bed, for he tells Esau, "I am old and I have no idea when I will die" (Genesis 27:2). These are not the words of a man who feels deathly ill. Isaac presumes that he has some time left before his death, so that he will later be able to bless Jacob also. However, events transpire so that, with Jacob leaving for Mesopotamia in order to find a wife, Isaac is forced to hurry up his game plan and to bless Jacob immediately.

It is not hard to imagine that Isaac's hope was to give Esau his blessing with a big fanfare, the feast preceding the blessing, and to permit Esau a period of time to enjoy the status conferred by this blessing. Thereafter, Isaac intended to give the more important blessing, the spiritual one, to Jacob. In order to preserve the relationship between the two brothers, it would not be surprising if Isaac intended to play down the importance of the spiritual blessing. After all, it is hard for a parent to tell one child that it is second to another. In order to compensate for this hurt, Isaac is trying to make up for the slight by pumping up the importance of the blessing that is being given to Esau with the fanfare of the feast that Esau is to prepare.

As it turns out, after Jacob's deception, because Esau intends to harm Jacob, Rebecca tells Jacob to flee for his life and to find safety in Mesopotamia. But before leaving, Rebecca (probably on the same day that Esau was blessed) tells Jacob to go to Isaac to receive his blessing, and Isaac then gives Jacob the blessing of Abraham, and charges him to marry a girl from the old country, from their own family, to "marry a daughter of your uncle Laban" (Genesis 28:2).

What Was Rebecca's Motive?

If it is correct that, all along, Isaac had intended to give the blessing of Abraham to Jacob, then what was the dispute between Isaac and his wife? Why was Rebecca so intent on seeing to it that Jacob deceive his father in order to receive the blessing intended for Esau? It is clear that Rebecca is a prime motivator of Jacob, to the point of goading him into undertaking the deception. She goes so far (when Jacob hesitates to trick his father) as to take upon herself any punishment for Jacob's acts (Genesis 27:11-13). Why was she so insistent on having her son deceive her husband?

There are two possibilities — either that Rebecca knew what her husband intended, or that she did not know. The evidence of the text is clear that Isaac intended to, and did give, the blessing of Abraham to Jacob. Perhaps Rebecca did not know this, and wanted to make sure that the more worthy child received this blessing. Evidence for this ap-

proach is the fact that, until the end of the story of the blessings, not once do Rebecca and Isaac talk directly to one another (until Genesis 27:46). But if that is the case, then we must wonder why Rebecca believes that a spiritual blessing will be valid if obtained by stealth. Additionally, most spouses, even when they disagree, know what the other one is thinking. This leads to the second possibility, that Rebecca knew that Isaac intended to give the spiritual blessing to Jacob. If this is so, then what was the dispute between her and Isaac? What did Rebecca consider wrong in what Isaac was about to do?

I suggest that the dispute related to their conceptions of the world. As a father who loved both of his sons, Isaac intended to split the material and spiritual blessings between his two children. Esau would receive the former and Jacob the latter. Rebecca believed that the two blessings could not be separated; the material blessing had to go to the spiritual heir. Without the substance to sustain a family, Rebecca believed, it would be impossible for Jacob to attain or maintain a high spiritual level. Isaac thought otherwise. Perhaps it was because he was the son of a wealthy man. (While Abraham had some struggles early on, by the time Isaac was born, Abraham had probably become wealthy (see Genesis 24:1). Isaac was second generation wealth and had even managed to augment the material successes of his father. The text makes this clear by telling us that Isaac “continued to prosper until he became very wealthy,” to the point where he was envied by his neighbors (Genesis 26:12-14). Isaac never knew material privation (or, at the worst, barely knew privation) and, therefore, he underestimated the importance of physical sustenance. Rebecca first appears in the Bible after Abraham has sent his faithful servant to seek a bride for his son, Isaac. This is the scene when we first meet Rebecca, as she meets a traveler by a well; she is unaware that the stranger is Abraham’s chief servant, who has gone in search of a bride for Isaac:

The servant ran toward her. “If you would, let me sip a little water from your jug,” he said.

“Drink, Sir,” she replied. She quickly lowered her jug to her hand and gave him a drink. When he had finished drinking, she said, “Let me draw water for your camels, so they can [also] drink their fill.” She quickly emptied her jug into the trough and ran to the well again to draw water for all his camels (Genesis, 24:17-20).

In this episode, Rebecca gives water to drink to the servant of Abraham and then draws water for all of the camels in his caravan. These do not sound like the actions of a pampered young woman. We can be safe in assuming that she works in the fields, has calluses on her hands, and does not take material wealth for granted. It is this background that animates her later belief that Jacob must have wealth to go with his spiritual blessing. She feels that Jacob will not fare well with only spiritual wealth. Rebecca, the former working girl, knows the

importance (and, presumably, the limitations) of wealth. She wants Jacob, her favorite, to be well off not only spiritually, but materially. Isaac disagrees.

Isaac's Trauma

There is a reason why Isaac wishes to divide the blessings between his sons. While the ultimate trauma of Isaac's life had to have come when his father offered him up for a sacrifice (Genesis 22:1-18), the first shock that Isaac suffers in his life is the expulsion of his half-brother, Ishmael. For many years, Sarah and Abraham had been childless, so Sarah had given her handmaid, Hagar the Egyptian, to Abraham as a second wife. And then Hagar had a child, Ishmael. Years later, Sarah, too, finally gave birth (to Isaac), and Sarah resented Isaac's rival, the half-brother Ishmael. So Sarah expelled Ishmael and his mother, Hagar, from the camp of Abraham into the wilderness; only a miracle of God saved them (Genesis 21:9-21).

Isaac empathized with his half-brother's fate and subconsciously feared a similar fate, one that would almost become a reality when Abraham offered him as a sacrifice to God. When giving his blessings, Isaac did not want to choose between his sons, as had his father. Therefore, Isaac had initially intended to provide for both of his sons. Rebecca (as Sarah before her) wants everything to go to one son, Jacob. Isaac, the harsh memories of the expulsion of his half-brother in mind, resists the idea of entirely cutting off one child. Isaac's sympathy for his half-brother is not mere conjecture. The two were close enough so that they buried their father, Abraham, together (Genesis 25:9).

Abraham never blessed Ishmael; instead, God (through an angel) blessed Ishmael (Genesis 21:17-18). But Isaac does not wish to entirely cut off one son and, in spite of Jacob's ruse, does provide a blessing to Esau. Isaac, to his credit, is incapable of casting a son off without some measure of a blessing. In fact, both in the desire to include Esau in his blessings and in the perception that Jacob is his true spiritual heir, Isaac shows himself worthy of respect. Isaac, passive personage that he is, deserves more admiration than many are willing to give him. By the end of this episode, he emerges as more than merely the son of Abraham, but a patriarch worthy of his burdens.

Opposites Attract

It should be noted that Rebecca's attraction to Jacob and Isaac's to Esau can be explained by the theory that opposites attract. The text clearly tells us that "Esau was a skilled trapper, a man of the field. Jacob was a scholarly man who remained in the tents. Isaac enjoyed eating Esau's game and favored him, but Rebecca favored Jacob" (Genesis 25:27-28).

As if to compensate for his failing eyesight and old age, Isaac identifies with the outdoorsman, Esau. Rebecca, having been exposed to the wily character of her deceptive brother, Laban (who will later exploit Jacob), is attracted to the scholarly Jacob. Ironically, Rebecca has more in common with her brother than she thinks, and prompts a deception that would be worthy of him.

Isaac Confirms Jacob's Blessing

The story bears close examination at the point right after Jacob successfully carries off the ruse of Rebecca. When Esau comes to give his father the meal which he has prepared, Isaac "was seized with a violent fit of trembling" (Genesis 27:33). He now begins to worry, by the ease of his deception, whether Rebecca has been right all along in believing that the spiritual blessing must be accompanied by a materialistic one.

It is at this juncture that Isaac still has the right to take away the materialistic blessing he had given to Jacob, *but he chooses not to do so*. Isaac says, "The blessing will remain his [Jacob's]," implying that Isaac could have changed his mind (Genesis 27:33). He still cares for his oldest son and promises him the "fat of the earth," but Isaac resigns himself to the fact that Esau will have to serve his younger brother. Isaac has been shocked into realizing that his wife has been right all along, and that the spiritual blessing (which he has intended all along to give to Jacob) must be coupled with the materialistic blessing.

The Prior Sale of the Birthright

The argument has been made by certain writers that Isaac changed his mind after Esau blurted out that Jacob had now deceived him twice. "First he took my birthright, and now my blessing" (Genesis 27:36). Esau is referring to an earlier episode when he had returned from the fields. Jacob was cooking a stew, and Esau said to Jacob, "Give me some . . . for I am famished." Jacob answered, "First sell me your birthright." And Esau did so (Genesis 25:27-34). The apologists for Jacob contend that this sale of the birthright by Esau to Jacob, regardless of the fact that Esau (as the text tells us) was famished and therefore under duress, justified the later deception by Jacob of his father. But that answer is weak. Regardless of what the twins are willing to arrange between themselves, it is Isaac's right to grant blessings to whom he chooses; it is not for children to decide how a parent should act.

While the text has reminded us of Esau's prior cavalier treatment of his privilege, it cannot be said that Esau's prior sale of the birthright influenced Isaac's decision to let Jacob's blessing stand, or justified Jacob's actions. Isaac had already decided that Jacob "will remain blessed" (Genesis 27:33), and only three verses later does Esau mention the sale

of the birthright. And, again, it was not for the brothers to trade the birthright between themselves. Isaac has the right to decide what blessings he will give to his children.

Further Evidence that Isaac Changed His Mind

Other evidence that Isaac had changed his mind (and realized that Jacob must receive the material blessing) comes from the absence, in the first blessing (when Isaac blessed Jacob thinking he was Esau) of any reference to which brother shall serve which brother; there is only a generalized reference to the fact that “nations will serve you, governments will bow down to you, and you will be master over your brothers; your mother’s children will prostrate themselves to you” (Genesis 27:29). The reference to “brothers” in the plural is to mankind in general and cannot mean that Esau (whom Isaac thinks he is blessing) will rule specifically over Jacob, because Esau had only one brother. Similarly, the statement that “your mother’s children will bow to you” cannot specifically mean Isaac’s children, as there is only one other child of his mother besides himself.

Thus, in the first blessing, we are not explicitly told which brother will serve which brother. It is only in the second blessing (when Isaac blesses the real Esau) that the explicit “pecking order” is stated — “You [Esau] will have to serve [at times] your brother” (Genesis 27:40). It is only when Esau is before him (and Isaac knows that it is truly Esau), that Isaac states that Jacob will prevail over his brother, Esau, further confirming Isaac’s prior blessing of Jacob. True, he trembled when he realized that Jacob had deceived him (Genesis 27:33), but perhaps he trembled because of the enmity between the brothers that Jacob’s actions had to engender, or because he had been so easily deceived, and understood how steeply his health had deteriorated. In any event, Isaac affirms that the blessing Jacob had received “will remain his” (Genesis 27:33).

The Fundamental Dispute About the Brothers’ Destiny

Another basis for the dispute between Isaac and Rebecca can be understood after reviewing one additional text. This episode goes back to the very beginning of the Jacob and Esau story, one that began in Rebecca’s womb, as related in Genesis 25:19-28:

These are the chronicles of Isaac son of Abraham:

Abraham was Isaac’s father. When Isaac was 40 years old, he married Rebecca, daughter of Bethuel the Aramaean of Padan Aram and sister of Laban the Aramaean.

His wife was sterile, and Isaac pleaded with God for her sake. God granted his plea, and Rebecca became pregnant. But the children clashed inside her, and when this occurred, she asked, “Why is this happening to me?” She went to seek a message from God.

God's word to her was, "Two nations are in your womb. Two governments will separate from inside you. The upper hand will go from one government to the other. The greater one will serve the younger."

When the time came for her to give birth, there were twins in her womb. The first one came out reddish, as hairy as a fur coat. They named him Esau. His brother then emerged, and his hand was grasping Esau's heel. [Isaac] named him Jacob. Isaac was 60 years old when [Rebecca] gave birth to them.

The boys grew up. Esau became a skilled trapper, a man of the field. Jacob was a scholarly man who dwelled in the tents. Isaac enjoyed eating Esau's game and favored him, but Rebecca favored Jacob.

The text has foreshadowed the story. "The greater [or older] one will serve the younger" (verse 23). The key to the dispute between Isaac and Rebecca is in the differing interpretations that each one of them had concerning God's words that the "greater one will serve the younger."

Isaac believes that both of his children will together serve God's interests. Isaac and his half-brother, Ishmael, did not go forward towards a common destiny. Perhaps it could not be, because they did not share a common mother. Yet, it is Isaac's hope that Esau and Jacob, both born of Rebecca, will share in God's work. Isaac sees the need for a strong nation led by Esau, "a skilled trapper, a man of the field" (verse 27), and this nation will be the ally of a spiritual nation, one led by Jacob, "a scholarly man" (verse 27). Isaac hopes that the brothers will go forward together, but the more important role is the spiritual one — that is the meaning of God's prophecy that "the greater one [the older one, Esau, the exemplar of power and materialism] will serve the younger [Jacob, the exemplar of study and spirituality]."

Rebecca understands these words differently. Presumably, she knew that Esau had spurned the birthright — either she had overheard the encounter (even as she would overhear Isaac requesting Esau to prepare a feast for him in order for Isaac to then bless Esau), or Jacob had told his mother what had happened. In any event, "Rebecca favored Jacob" (verse 28). She took God's words literally, that Esau (the older) was to serve the younger one (Jacob). Rebecca does not believe that Esau and Jacob are to share a common destiny, and she encourages Jacob to act deceitfully — presumably, she had reached the point of knowing that Isaac could not be persuaded to her view.

Why did Rebecca believe that the two brothers would not get along? She knew the defects of Esau's character better than her husband, who was evidently influenced, as the text (verse 28) suggests, by his enjoyment of (and dependence on) the game that Esau brought to him. Additionally, she may have understood God's words better than Isaac did. She had been told, "Two nations are in your womb." For Rebecca, nations have interests, but not common destinies. Indeed, she had felt the strife in her womb, and knew that it was an eternal destiny. Isaac

was the idealist hoping for the irreconcilable to be reconciled. Rebecca was the realist, and her will determined the future that God had foreshadowed.

In sum, Jacob's deception is successful not because he "stole" the spiritual and material blessings. Jacob received the spiritual blessing from Isaac, which had been Isaac's intention all along. As to the material blessing, Isaac realized that the ease with which he had been deceived was strong evidence that he did not really know what was going on in his own household any more. He no longer trusted his own judgments and, by refusing to renege on the blessing to Jacob (and by actually affirming his mistake by emphasizing that Esau will serve Jacob), Isaac gave in to Rebecca. He realized that the brothers could never (after Jacob's deceitful actions) be eternal allies. The key spiritual and material blessings, therefore, could not be separated, and had to go to Jacob. Isaac's destiny paralleled that of his father's — as Abraham had to exclude one son, so must Isaac.

This is not to say that Jacob was correct in what he did. Jacob intended to, and did successfully, deceive his father, and for this he suffered the deceptions of others the rest of his days. While the text tells us that Abraham died at an "old age and contented" (Genesis 25:8) and that Isaac died "in a ripe old age" (Genesis 35:29), Jacob himself describes his years as having been "few and hard" (Genesis 47:9). Jacob paid the price for his actions.

Contacts Between Jewish and Indo-Tibetan Civilizations Through the Ages

NATHAN KATZ

JEWISH JOURNALIST ARTHUR MAGIDA related a conversation with His Holiness, the Dalai Lama. In the back seat of a car, the Dalai Lama commented: "The fifth century BCE was the time of the Golden Age of Greece and of the Buddha and of Isaiah. And yet, there was little — if any — contact or cross-fertilization between the religions of the West and the Indian religions. Amazing!"¹

What is amazing is not that this cross-fertilization did not take place, because it *did* take place. What is "a-mazing," in the sense of losing ourselves in a maze, is our lack of memory of these ancient linkages. The Greeks knew about the Buddha and other Indian philosophic schools as well. And ancient Israel knew about India. But, today, very few people know that the Buddha and King Solomon share legends; that Sanskrit words are found in Hebrew scripture; and that Jewish martyrs at Masada were encouraged upon hearing about Indian attitudes towards death.

Memory raises perplexing philosophic problems, especially since memory is constructed in the present in such a way as to create a past, an identity and a history. That what we remember constructs who we are is an insight shared by contemporary Western philosophy and classical Buddhist thought. What we need to add is that what we forget also makes for our identity. And all of us, Jews and Tibetans, have forgotten that we go back a very long way together.

It was relatively recently that we forgot one another. With the rise of European empires came a division of the world into a mutually inscrutable "East" and "West." But "East" and "West" are recent fabrications. Underlying this convenient, political deception is a continuity of cross-fertilization dating back thousands of years. Before the coming of the Europeans in the sixteenth century, a constant flow of goods and ideas followed caravan routes and monsoon winds, from India and China to Israel and Greece. The historic Tibetan-Jewish dialogue during October 1990 was not the beginning of something new, but the rediscovery and celebration of these ancient linkages.

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Hints in the Hebrew Bible

The First Book of Kings and Second Chronicles describe the opulence of the tenth-century BCE Court of King Solomon, an opulence which the Bible suggests derived from the India trade. I Kings 10:22 reads:

And all King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold; none were of silver: that was considered nothing in the days of Solomon. For the king had at sea a ship of Tarshish with a ship of Hiram: once in three years the ship of Tarshish came, bringing gold and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks. So King Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom.²

No one knows with certainty the referent of the name, Tarshish. Was it the personal name of a shipping magnate, or was it a type of ship?³ Was it a port in the Yemen, where goods from India were received and then sent by camel caravan to Israel, Egypt and, later, Greece? Or northeast Africa, or even Spain? Or was it an Indian port, as suggested by three Hebrew words of obvious Indian origin: *shenhabim*, ivory, a literal translation of the Sanskrit *ibha-danda*, "elephant's tooth;" *qopeyim*, apes, from the Tamil *kopī*; and *tukiyim*, peacocks, from the Tamil *tukī*;⁴ Where was the Ofir mentioned in II Chronicles 8:18? Might it be the Indian port of Supara, near the mouth of the Indus River?

The Evidence from the Jātaka

We find a parallel reference to this ancient sea trade in the *Bāveru Jātaka*, a Buddhist text which refers to ancient trade between India and Babylon, *Bāveru* in Sanskrit according to some scholars.⁵ In this text, which was probably redacted between the fifth and first centuries BCE, but which recounts much earlier events, we read "...of Indian merchants who took periodic voyages to the land of Bāveru (Babylonia)." Similarly, in the *Kevaddhu Sutta*, a Pāli text which, according to Buddhist tradition, was spoken by the Buddha during the sixth century BCE and which was redacted during the first century BCE, "...we read of how long ago merchants sailed far out of sight from the coast, taking 'shore-sighting birds,' which were released from time to time, in order that they might guide the mariners to land."⁶ Not only is the verse reminiscent of the Biblical Noah story (Gen. 6:9-11:32), but these Buddhist texts tend to indicate a much earlier use of the Indian Ocean sea lanes than is commonly believed to have been the case.

There is one more connection between King Solomon and the Buddha, this one found in the *Mahoshadha Jātaka*, where we read about a *yakshini* (demoness) who stole a baby from its mother, intending to eat it. The mother confronted the *yakshini*, but was rebuked by the demoness, who claimed the baby as her own. Arguing, they happened

to pass the judgment hall of the Mahārāja of Kashi (Benares), who was none other than the Buddha in a previous birth. The text reads:

He [the Mahārāja] heard the noise, sent for them, inquired into the matter, and asked them whether they would abide by his decision. And they agreed. Then he had a line drawn on the ground, and told the *yakshini* to take hold of the child's arms, and the mother to take hold of its legs, and said: "The child shall be hers who drags him over the line." But as soon as they pulled at him, the mother, seeing how he suffered, grieved as if her heart would break. And letting him go, she stood there weeping...Then he said, "Who do you think is the mother — she who has the child in her arms, or she who has let go?" And they answered, "She who has let go is the mother."

The tale concludes happily. The child was returned to the rightful mother, and the remorseful *yakshini* vowed to follow the five basic ethical precepts of the Buddha.⁷

This legend of the Buddha, of course, is strikingly similar to the judgment tale of King Solomon (1 Kings 3:16-28):

Then came two women, that were harlots, to the king, and stood before him. And the one woman said, "O my lord, I and this woman dwell in one house; and I was delivered of a child with her in the house. And it came to pass the third day after I was delivered, that this woman was delivered also...And this woman's child died in the night, because she lay upon it. And she arose at midnight, and took my son from beside me, while thy handmaiden slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom. And when I arose in the morning to give my child suck, behold, it was dead; but when I had looked closely at it in the morning, behold, it was not my son that I did bear." And the other woman said, "No; but the living child is my son, and the dead one is thy son...." Then said the king, "The one says, 'This is my son that lives, and thy son is dead;' and the other says, 'No; but thy son is dead, and my son is the living.'" And the king said, "Bring me a sword." And they brought a sword before the king. And the king said, "Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other." Then spoke the woman whose child was the living one to the king, for her love was enkindled towards her son, and she said, "O my lord, give her the living child, but do not slay it." But the other said, "Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it." Then the king answered and said, "Give her the living child, and do not slay it; she is the mother." And all of Israel heard the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king; for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgment. So King Solomon was king over all Israel.

The Buddhist tale comes from a very popular genre of literature known as the *Jātaka*, or birth-story. These homilies are very beloved in all Buddhist countries, and are told and retold from generation to generation. They are believed to have been spoken by the Buddha himself during the sixth century BCE, which would make them about one hundred years younger than the *Book of Kings* is believed to be. As usual, however, matters are not quite so simple. The Solomon story, according to Jewish tradition, related events of the tenth century BCE,

and the Buddhist *Jātaka* literature was not written down until the first century BCE at the earliest. All of this makes it impossible to say with any certainty who is borrowing from whom, or whether Jews and Buddhists were borrowing from a yet older, common source, or whether this striking similarity was simply coincidental.

However, there is another very significant *Jātaka* connection which links Buddhists with Jews, this one very much later and quite accessible to historical inquiry. The entire *Jātaka* literature was made known to the Western world by Jewish merchants of the early Middle Ages. The pioneering scholar of Pāli and early Buddhist literature, Thomas William Rhys Davids, wrote with a condescending air on this subject in 1880:

[The Jews] were naturally attracted by a kind of literature such as this — Oriental in morality, amusing in style, and perfectly free from Christian legend and from Christian dogma. It was also the kind of literature which travellers would most easily become acquainted with, and we need not therefore be surprised to hear that a Jew, named Symeon Seth, about 1080 A.D., made the first translation into a European language, viz., into modern Greek. Another Jew, about 1250, made a translation of a slightly different recension...into Hebrew; and a third, John of Capua, turned this Hebrew version into Latin between 1263 and 1278. At about the same time as the Hebrew version, another was made direct from the Arabic into Spanish, and a fifth into Latin; and, from these five versions, translations were afterwards made into German, Italian, French, and English. The title of the second Latin version just mentioned is very striking — it is “Æsop the Old.”⁸

To complete a cycle which reveals not only the sustained cultural intercourse between India and the West, but also the pivotal Jewish role in that intercourse, Æsop's fables were translated, late in the last century, from English into Sanskrit,⁹ a return to their original cultural and linguistic home.

Early Jewish Historical Writing

There are references to the ancient linkages between India and Israel in Jewish historical writings, as well as in the Talmud, the authoritative rabbinic compositions of the first through sixth centuries CE. Of Jewish historical writers from ancient times, the preeminent was Josephus, the first century Hellenized Jew who left us some of our best knowledge of the late Second Temple period.

Josephus is by no means an entirely reliable source. It is said that he was as likely to inject his views of what ought to have happened, as he was to report accurately what did happen. Therefore, we cannot claim any literal sense of history from him. What we get is a good sense of his cultural milieu, the assumptions that his society held, and the general world-view that he held.

Of particular interest for us is Josephus' account of the martyrdom

at Masada. He put his views into the speeches of Eleazar, the leader of the rebels of the hilltop fortress at Masada, which was under Roman siege. Dramatically, as the Romans were about to overrun the defiant Jews, Eleazar argued that mass martyrdom was preferable to capture. He presented a variety of arguments, but the one which convinced his audience to take the fateful step was a comparison of Jews and Indians. Josephus had Eleazar saying:

We...who have been brought up in a discipline of our own, ought to become an example to others of our readiness to die. Yet if we do stand in need of foreigners to support us in this matter, let us regard those Indians who profess the exercise of philosophy, for these good men do but unwillingly undergo the time of life, and look upon it as a necessary servitude, and make haste to let their souls loose from their bodies: nay, when no misfortune presses them to do it, nor drives them upon it, these have such a desire for a life of immortality that they tell other men beforehand that they are about to depart; and nobody hinders them, but every one thinks them happy men, and gives them letters to be carried to their familiar friends [that are dead], so firmly and certainly do they believe that souls converse with one another [in the other world]. So when these men have heard all such commands that were to be given them, they deliver their body to the fire; and in order to their getting [for] their soul a separation from the body in the greatest purity, they die in the midst of hymns of commendations made to them; for their dearest friends conduct them to their death more readily than do any of the rest of mankind conduct their fellow-citizens when they are going on a very long journey, who at the same time weep on their own account, but look upon the others as happy persons, so soon to be made partakers of the immortal order of beings. Are not we, therefore, ashamed to have lower notions than the Indians, and by our cowardice to lay a base reproach upon the laws of our country, which are so much desired and imitated by all mankind?¹⁰

Josephus wrote that the Jews at Masada were convinced by this argument, and the martyrdom then proceeded. But this tantalizing story raises nearly as many questions as it answers: How could Josephus have known what Eleazar said? Were there survivors of Masada who gave reports, as his translator, William Whiston, suggests?¹¹ Was he describing events, or was he propounding his view of what events should have been? How did he become knowledgeable about Indian beliefs and religious practices?

Some scholars emphasize that Josephus was a very Hellenized Jew, as were many from the educated classes of his day. He modeled his histories after the Greek historians, especially Thucydides, and the Greeks held India in the highest regard as the home of the greatest philosophers. In both Greek and Indian literature, we read of exciting philosophic dialogues occurring regularly, especially in the wake of Alexander of Macedon's invasion of India during the third century BCE. One of the best known of these ancient dialogues was recorded in the Buddhist text, the *Milindapañha*, in which a Graeco-Bactrian king posed

questions to the Buddhist monk, Nagasena.¹² Therefore, it could be argued, in citing India as the paradigm of philosophic courage, Josephus was doing no more than reflecting a Hellenized world-view. On the other hand, if there had been such sustained commerce between India and ancient Israel for so long — despite an interruption caused by the breakdown of the Persian Empire during the fourth century BCE — then Josephus' account might not be entirely Hellenized in its viewpoint. Whether via Greece or via direct contact, it is clear that Jews during the late Second Temple period were aware of Indian spirituality and regarded it highly.

Scattered Talmudic References

The Talmud contains four references to India. The first refers to the ancient pepper trade. Commenting on the Biblical verse — “I planted vineyards: I made gardens and orchards, and I planted trees of all kind of fruits” (Ecclesiastes 2:5) — to which was added “even peppers,” Rabbi Abba bar Kahana asked: “Solomon made use of winds (*ruhot*) and he sent to India.”¹³ Barbara Johnson suggested that *ruhot* ought to be read as “winds” rather than as “spirits,” as is common practice. She argued that Rabbi Kahana

...is thought to have come from Babylonia, so he must have been...aware of the Indian origin of pepper. Though *ruhot* is interpreted and translated by all the commentators as “spirits,” I would suggest that it could also refer, in its more common meaning of “winds,” to the Hippalus monsoon winds.¹⁴

A second Talmudic reference to India comes from a later era. In *Pirquei Avot*,¹⁵ the term *pilpul* first was used for the sharpening of the wits through vociferous debate, a characteristic of traditional Jewish education, or *yeshivah* education, to this day. (Intriguingly, among all the world's religious traditions, only Judaism and Tibetan Buddhism have developed and continue to practice debate as a religious practice.) The Hebrew term for debate, *pilpul*, derives from the Hebrew for pepper, *pilpel*, which is the Sanskrit *pippali*. Pepper was the most prized product of India in the Greek and Roman Empires. In fact, an alternative word for *pippali* is *yavana-priya*, “beloved of the Greeks/Romans,” and it is said that the Roman Empire bankrupted itself due to its love of pepper imported from India, which quite literally was worth its weight in gold. Certainly during the medieval times, and quite likely from ancient times as well, much of the pepper trade between the Malabar Coast of India and the West was in the hands of Jewish traders at Cranganore and, later, Cochin.

In the early tenth century, the great rationalist interpreter of Torah, Saadia ben Joseph (882-942), known as Saadia Gaon, made passing reference to the Jewish India trade: “...one will find that the ignorant

people of our town [Sura in Babylonia] are of the opinion that everyone who goes to India becomes rich....There exist many more ridiculous opinions like these."¹⁶ Finally, the great eleventh century French commentator, Rabbi Shlomo bar Isaac (1040-1105), better known by the acrostic, Rashi, mentioned one Rabbi Judah from India, whom Rashi considered a convert. Several Talmudic travelers' tales were attributed to this Indian rabbi.¹⁷

Christian Sources

Jews have lived in India since early in the Common Era, and perhaps even earlier. Indian Christians tell that their founder, the Apostle Thomas, came to India in the year 52 CE because he wanted to tell his fellow Jews about his purported messiah. While the literal truth of this story is doubtful, nevertheless, the discovery of the monsoon winds in the year 45 CE made such travel possible and greatly enhanced trade. The fall of Jerusalem to the Romans in 70 CE propelled Jews to seek new homes spanning the globe, including India.

The third century Christian bishop of Caeseria, Eusebius, wrote of Jewish settlements in India as early as the first century. In his *Ecclesiastical History*, he discussed an Alexandrian Stoic philosopher by the name of Pantænus, who "was sent as far as India" to evangelize "the heathen in the East." Pantænus, also known as the tutor to Clement of Alexandria¹⁸ and Origen,¹⁹ made his journey just after the reign of Marcus Aurelius, which would place him in India around 181 CE. Eusebius continued: "...he found there that among some of those there who had known Christ, the Gospel of Matthew had preceded his coming; for Bartholomew, one of the apostles, had preached to them and had left them the writing of Matthew in Hebrew letters, which was preserved...."²⁰ According to G.A. Williamson, "This seems to imply that Bartholomew found a Jewish community."²¹

While Eusebius' comment raises many questions, at a minimum we may gather that during the third century in Israel, it was believed that there had been Jews living in India for at least two centuries. This is the earliest bit of external evidence for Jewish settlements in India. Not too much later, the fourth-century Christian, St. Jerome, mentioned Jewish trading colonies which stretched from Mauritania in Africa to India.²²

Medieval Links in Trade and Culture

Jews were a trading link between Christian Europe and Hindu-Buddhist India. In those days, trade carried with it culture. For example, an eighth-century Muslim caliph named Es-Saffah sent a Jew to India to learn mathematics.²³ Because of his mission, the Western world came to learn about integral numbers, the basis of modern arith-

metic. In fact, in the West we misname our numerical notation system as “Arabic numerals” when, in fact, they were brought by Jews from India via the Middle East to Europe; they get their name from a mistakenly perceived Middle Eastern source. The ancient spice trade followed land and sea routes between the Middle East and south India. The famous silk routes, which may date from as early as the second century, linked Europe with China. Muslim travellers’ diaries from the ninth and tenth century testify to the prominent role of Jews in both of these trades.

Although Christian missionaries proclaimed the discovery of a Jewish community in Tibet as early as 1833,²⁴ these early reports were without foundation. Missionary Thomas Torrance caused quite a stir among the Royal Asiatic Society of Shanghai when he enthusiastically reported that the Chiang tribes of western Sichuan were a lost Israelite tribe.²⁵ Torrance promulgated his “discovery” in 1939,²⁶ a tale which was put to rest only very recently.²⁷

Despite enthusiastic tales of Jews on Tibet’s borders, it is a curiosity that we know of no Jewish settlements in Tibet proper. Part of the problem is that Indic languages do not distinguish among “Western peoples.” The Sanskrit *yavana* is the term for all “foreigners,” even though the term originally meant any Greek.²⁸ We do, however, know about Jewish settlements virtually encircling Tibet.

Jews to the South, in India

According to indigenous traditions, there have been Jewish communities in India since the beginning of the first millennium. When the Second Temple was destroyed by Roman conquerors and Jews were dispersed to the four corners of the world in 70 CE, a small colony near Cochin, on the Malabar Coast, was established. Cochin, near the very southern tip of India, is very far from Tibet. Yet, it is intriguing that when Jews from Amsterdam wrote a letter in the late eighteenth century to Yehezkel Rahabi, leader of Cochin Jewry, one of the questions that they posed was whether he knew of Jewish communities in China and Tibet. Rahabi knew of the former, but as to the latter he wrote, “Regarding your query whether there are Jews in Tibet, I beg to inform your Eminence that this place is unknown to us....”²⁹

Some time later, Jews who may have been fleeing persecution in Persia were shipwrecked near Bombay. They became known as the “Bene Israel” and are India’s largest Jewish community. Today, Bene Israel are found as far north as Delhi, where they interact well with the capital’s Tibetan community.

Later still, Persian-speaking Jews became courtiers of the Mughal emperors at Agra and Delhi. One of them, an eclectic Kabbalist and poet, became tutor to the heir to the throne, Dara Shukoh, but he

and the prince were executed when Aurangzeb seized power in a coup.³⁰ This mystic, Sarmad by name, is assumed by most to have been Muslim, and his popular *dargah* (shrine) is just beside the main entrance to Delhi's Jama Masjid.

During medieval times, many Jewish traders plied land and sea routes, bringing tin to India for repair and returning west with spices and linen. Their ships sailed the seas from Spain to China, visiting ports near Bombay and Cochin, as well as in Ceylon, and were the only group which could "...pass with impunity through the otherwise impenetrable barrier which separated Christianity from Islam."³¹ Ibn Battúta, one of the great medieval Muslim geographers, traveled these same routes, and described Jewish and Muslim ships unloading and re-loading cargo in the thriving harbors of India and China.³²


Arabic-speaking Jews from Iraq came to Indian port cities to seek their fortunes in trade during British times, and at least one of their families traded directly with Tibet through Kalimpong. Those felt hats of which Tibetans were so fond were imported from Italy by the Sopher family of Bombay. Another member of this community, this one a Kabbalist who hailed from Yemen, made his home in Darjeeling.³³ Hyeem Hyeem was a *shohet* (ritual slaughterer) and prolific author. Another Jewish mystic of Darjeeling (rDo-rje-gling) was Asher Hallevy (1849-1912), Austrian by birth and cobbler by trade. Among Hallevy's mystical works are an autobiography, a treatise on psychology and religion, a book of visions, and commentaries on Psalms and the Book of Esther.³⁴ Both Hyeem's and Hallevy's manuscripts need to be examined for any mystical cross-fertilization from their Tibetan neighbors in Darjeeling.

Finally, a mysterious group of tribals from the far northeast of India recently have claimed Jewish ancestry. In their legends, they went from ancient Israel to China, and passed through Tibet en route to Mizoram, Burma, and Tripura, where several thousand have recently undergone Orthodox conversions to Judaism.³⁵

Jews to the West, in Kashmir

To the west, there was a Jewish community in Kashmir, and to this day many Kashmiris claim to be descendants of Israel. The great Muslim geographer, Al-Beruni, commented on the Jewish presence there: "It is very difficult to have any commerce with [the Kashmiris]....In former times they used to allow one or two foreigners to enter their country, particularly Jews, but at present they do not allow any Hindu whom they do not know personally, to enter, much less other people."³⁶

Interestingly, al-Beruni noted a theological similarity between Judaism and Hinduism, an emphasis on God's transcendent ineffability:

The Hindus begin their books with OM, the word of creation....The figure of the word OM is . This figure does not consist of any

letters; it is simply an image inverted to represent this word, which people use, believing that it will bring them a blessing, and meaning thereby a confession of the unity of God. Similar to this is the manner in which Jews write the name of God, vis., by three (two? see footnote) Hebrew *yods*. In the [Torah] the word is written YHVH and pronounced *Adonai*; sometimes they also say *Yah*. The word *Adonai*, which they pronounce, is not expressed in writing.³⁷

To the North, at Silk Route Oases and in the Court of the Mongols

It is fairly well known that Jews frequented the trading centers along the silk routes, which may have been established as early as the second century CE. Stein reported on a Judeo-Persian document from the very early eighth century found by D.S. Margoliouth at Dandan-Uiliq, near Dunhuang, Turkestan,³⁸ and in the Cave of a Thousand Buddhas at Duanhuang, Pelliot "...found a Hebrew prayer written on paper, which the experts also date as 8th century. Because only China had paper at that time, it must have been...written by a Jew within China's borders, since it couldn't have come from the outside. These two artifacts prove that in Xinjiang along the Silk Route between Asia and Europe there are traces of Jews in a number of cities, especially in Dunhuang."³⁹

Khotan, a Tibetan provincial center at the time, was such an important trading center that most medieval geographers thought it was Tibet's capital.⁴⁰ A Muslim travelogist of the tenth century mentioned Jews living in that multireligious city: "In 941 a Muslim traveler, Abu Dulaf, came to a tribe in Tübat (probably Tibet, or more specifically the oasis of Hotan [Khotan], which had belonged to Tibet), where he found a large city built of cane, and inhabited also by Muslims, Jews, Christians, Magians, and Hindus. He also found Jews in neighboring Bahi...."⁴¹

Some Jews attained high position at the Mongol court. According to very recent research, a Jew from Shanxi Province named Zhou Zhuhu (Zhou the Jew, derived from Persian) became a close advisor to Genghis Khan during the thirteenth century. Interestingly, we know about Zhou only because of the virtue of his wife, Cui. In *The New Yuan [Dynastic] History*, a nineteenth century work, Cui, a Jewess, is lauded "as the perfect Confucian woman." At the death of her husband, Cui gave away all her possessions, supporting herself by spinning and weaving, and conducted herself so decorously that later Confucian historians claimed her as one of their own.⁴²

As we have seen, there were Jews in the northwestern part of what is today China at least from the eighth century. There were Jews in China proper, as well. A Chinese historian who specializes on the Jews, Pan Guandan, argues for a Jewish presence in Guangzhou (Canton), Ganpu and Hangzhou during the late Tang dynasty, or the ninth century, as well as medieval communities in Ningbo, Beijing, Quanzhou, Ningxia, Yungzhou and Nanjing, as well as the famous community at Kaifeng, during medieval times.⁴³

Tibet, then, was virtually encircled with Jewish settlements, however small, in India, Kashmir, Turkestan, and China. It appears that Tibet at one time controlled a city, Khotan, with a Jewish community, during the eighth century.

Religious Interactions

All of these historical fragments hint at ongoing Jewish-Tibetan contacts, preceded by millennia of varied Jewish-Indian and Jewish-Buddhist connections. Even more difficult to establish than contacts between Jews and Tibetans are the mutual influences between Judaism and Tibetan Buddhism. We have noted the similarity between legends about King Solomon and the Buddha. There seems to be another religious link as well, this between Jewish messianism and the Tibetan Kalacakra system.

In this case, there does not appear to have been any direct influence; indeed, both Jewish messianism and the Kalacakra seem to stem from a common source in ancient Persian religion, probably Zoroastrian.⁴⁴ What we can learn from this mediated interaction between Judaism and Tibetan Buddhism is that a religious spirit may reverberate differently in differing cultures, but the original religious impetus for these developments may remain identifiable. Rather than looking for a mechanistic, one-to-one borrowing, scholars must address a more fluid model for interactions among religions. The history of the religious impetus which expressed itself in both Kalacakra Tantra and in Jewish messianism ought to be analyzed from the perspective of providing such a fluid model of interreligious interaction.

Recent Contacts

Anyone familiar with the Tibetan refugee community is well aware of how Tibetans identified their painful experience of exile with Jewish history. For example, when the Tibetan Information and International Relations Office wished to commemorate the 2,100th anniversary of the political independence of Tibet on March 6, 1973, it published a Tibetan-language pamphlet entitled "An Outline of the History of Is-

rael.” It is significant that the pamphlet was written by Jamyang Norbu, then-President of the Tibetan Youth Congress and one of the refugee community’s most well-known leaders. The “Introduction” to Norbu’s work reads, in part:

As a result of the Communist Chinese invasion of the rich land of Tibet, today we have been deprived of our own history, our constitution, and the free preservation of our unique culture and customs....Today we have a tremendous responsibility on our shoulders. It is now time for us to rise and work hard to achieve the aspirations of the millions of our brothers and sisters left behind in Tibet. But to achieve such a noble cause, we must learn lessons from someone who had experienced the same tragic fate. We need to derive a source of inspiration from a people whose determination and hard work achieved their long-awaited goal....Israel, whose people had struggled for 2,000 years under many difficulties and hardships to get their land and freedom back.⁴⁵

Norbu’s 25-page tract attributes Jewish survival to the Jewish religion and to Jewish tenacity, but he also keenly observed that a Jewish readiness to learn from other cultures was also a key to survival:

They [the Jews] went to all the different countries of the world and took asylum. These displaced people, no matter where they went and settled, continued to cherish and preserve their religion and culture, and were thus able to maintain their distinct identity during their long exile....In addition to this, they also worked hard to gain all sorts of knowledge from outside during their long period of exile. As a result, the people of Israel are known throughout the world for their intelligence and courage....[They] were also well-versed in poetry, medicine and music....The Jews suffered tremendous difficulties and hardships because of the jealousy and hatred of the people of those countries in which they lived, as the Israelis always turned out to be the most intelligent and successful in every field.⁴⁶

Norbu also observed the crucial role played by the values of education and charity in Jewish survival, values emulated by the Tibetan refugee community:

[The Jews] cherished their race and made tremendous efforts to educate their children. New schools were opened at their own expense. Rich people helped the poor ones, and the poor helped those who were poorer than themselves. Each family member tried to contribute even their last dollar to the community. The community, in turn, helped to educate those children whose families could not afford their educational expenses. Religious people, old men and women, and unemployed people, were supported from community funds. They had not only physical unity, but also unity of souls. Their love for one another and their mutual bonds are so strong that no matter how hard hostile governments tried to mistreat and abuse them, they could not harm them. Instead, these hostile conditions became a blessing in disguise, as their dedication and bonds to one another only became stronger forever. Although no outside nation came forward to support them, they boldly stood on their own legs and faced all circumstances.⁴⁷

Nearly two decades after the publication of Norbu’s pamphlet, His

Holiness, the Dalai Lama, expressed a similar view during the October, 1990, Tibetan-Jewish dialogue:

When we became refugees, we knew that our struggle would not be easy. It will take a long time, generations. Very often we would refer to the Jewish people, how they kept their identity and faith despite such hardship and so much suffering. And when external conditions were ripe, they were ready to rebuild their nation. So you see, there are many things to learn from our Jewish brothers and sisters.¹⁸

This sense of affinity has been mutual. Jewish delegates to the dialogue spoke of their identification with the Tibetans' struggle, based upon their own history.⁴⁹ More than generalized compassion, it was an identity of suffering that "we felt in our bones." When the Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1989, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, representing the Reform Movement of Judaism, was the first religious body to offer congratulations.⁵⁰ The American Jewish World Service, a development organization, has worked closely with the Hunsur settlement in South India, and plans to expand efforts in this direction.⁵¹ And, of course, Western scholars of Tibetan Buddhism include a disproportionate number of Jews.

Conclusions

Jews and Tibetans are two very small peoples, numbering thirteen and six million respectively. Each has cultivated unique and influential expressions of religion, reaching far beyond their modest numbers to enrich humanity's common spiritual heritage. Far from being strangers to one another, Jews and Tibetans have interacted through the centuries, at times subtly. The recent exile of the Tibetan people precipitously cast them into the modern world, which entails dialogue with other religious traditions. In the course of their dialogue with Jews, one serendipitous discovery has been the antiquity of longstanding connections between these two ancient and holy peoples. We have only hints of the past, but perhaps new evidence remains to be found. Perhaps now scholars, both Jews and Tibetans, can view the past with an eye toward this rediscovery of one another.

NOTES

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3. *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishers, 1971), s.v. "Trade and Commerce," p. 1296.
4. Chaim Rabin, "Loanword Evidence in Biblical Hebrew for Trade between Tamilnad and Palestine in the First Millennium B.C.," pp. 432-40 in *Proceedings of the Second International Seminar of Tamil Studies*, vol. 1 (Madras: International Association of Tamil Research, 1971), pp. 432-33.
5. Hugh George Rawlinson, *Intercourse between India and the Western World, from the*

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6. Rawlinson, *Op. cit.*, p. 5. Emphasis in original.

7. Thomas William Rhys-Davids, trans., *Buddhist Birth Stories; or, Jātaka Tales* (London: Trübner & Co., 1880), pp. xxii-xxvi.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. xxx-xxxi.

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11. *Ibid.*, p. 335, fn. 1.

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14. *Ibid.*, pp. 14-5.

15. *Pirkei Avot* 16.6:6, *Tem.* 16a; cited in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, s.v. "Pepper," p. 270.

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17. B. *Kid.* 22b, *BB* 74b; cited in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, s.v. "India," p. 1350.

18. Rawlinson, *Op. cit.*, p. 141.

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22. St. Jerome, "*Epistle ad Dardanum*," in J.P. Migne, ed., *Patrologiae Cursus Completus* (Paris: Migne, 1854), p. 1104; See also N. Slousch, "*Les Juifs et le Judaïsme aux Indes*," *Révue du Monde Musulman* 4, 1910: 733.

23. Shirley Berry Isenberg, *India's Bene Israel: A Comprehensive Inquiry and Source Book* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1988), p. 20.

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25. Anonymous, "The Chiang Tribes of Western Szechwan," *Journal of the China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 66, 1935: 126; See also Anonymous, "Une Tribu Juive au Thibet," *Bulletin Catholique de Pekin* 26, 307, 1929: 142-143.

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28. See Pierre Meile, "*Les Yavannas dans l'Inde Tamoule*," *Journal Asiatique* 1940/41: 85-123.

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46. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.
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48. Remarks by H.H. the Dalai Lama. October 29, 1990, tape recorded by the author.
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Moses in the Light of Schiller

HENRY REGENSTEINER

BIALIK SAID, "WE ARE THE LAST GENERATION of bondage and the first of redemption."¹ The renowned Jewish poet, who was at home equally in Hebrew and in Yiddish, has been compared with Yehuda Halevy, with whom he shared an enthusiasm for a national revival. Some of this inspiration, the writer of these lines submits, derived from Bialik's interest in German literature, notably Lessing and Schiller, and it was in 1923 that Bialik's translation into Hebrew of Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* (1804) appeared, a work about the Swiss struggle for independence that must have stirred him.

He was not the only one who was impressed by the liberal views of the author of *The Ode to Joy*. Schiller's fame, particularly prior to World War One, was widespread, and he enjoyed an enviable reputation even in Orthodox Jewish households and was eulogized by rabbis, for instance by Samson Raphael Hirsch. Today, the name of Schiller, which is still widely appreciated in Europe, is almost forgotten in America despite spasmodic attempts to perform some of his plays. This may in part be due to the misinterpretation of his work, for the Nazis, when they came to power in 1933, claimed that the classicist had drawn the caricature of a Jew in his drama, *Die Räuber* ("The Robbers," 1781), and that Schiller was, therefore, an anti-Semite. It is the object of this article to put to rest such an absurd allegation, which is patently false, a one-sided and slanted misrepresentation, for, in later years, according to Thomas Mann,² Schiller considered his first drama "unbearable."

Schiller suffered under harsh discipline while he was a student in the academy of the Duke of Württemberg. He had read the Bible but knew no Jews. He sought relief from repression by the reading of books and by his writing attempts. Though the populace was still charged with hatred for Joseph Süss Oppenheimer, a Jewish financial agent of a former duke, and who had been executed for alleged fraud, Schiller, disregarding this bias, was planning to write an epic about Moses. The work, if completed, is not extant. It may have been put aside in favor of *Die Räuber*, which, with its rebellion spirit as a *Storm and Stress* play brought about the moment of truth; he broke with his past and lived as a refugee writer on the generosity of his friends. While he was the houseguest of one of them and was putting the finishing touches on *Kabale und Liebe* ("Love and Intrigue," 1784), his third play, he made

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what was perhaps his first acquaintance with a Jew, the tradesman Mat-tich.³ Their relationship was mutually agreeable and the discussions between them may have induced Schiller to devote himself even more to the study of philosophy, history and ethics. He wrote a number of articles and one, the historical treatise, *Geschichte des Abfalls der Vereinigten Niederlande von der spanischen Regierung* (History of the Secession of the United Netherlands from the Spanish Government," 1788) was to be of special significance. In this work Schiller expressed the fear that man, striving to be morally free, was threatened to be vanquished by the force of despotism. Yet, when his fortunes seemed to look darkest the free man would, like General Washington at Valley Forge, venture forth again to confound the oppressor. When, in 1789, the University of Jena offered him a professorship on the basis of this study, Schiller, the idealistic poet, was prepared to express his high regard for Moses and, incidentally, also, for the Jews.

With his inaugural lecture⁴ about the purpose for studying universal history, Schiller, the idealistic innovator, tried to reach out to his audience in an effort to involve them personally in the search for truth. His was to be an experimental approach; he wished to be more flexible than his more senior colleagues who refused to alter their time-honored procedures. In his second lecture, Schiller, who was determined to make his own evaluations, gave an example; it was his anthropological and sociological analysis of the evolution of the first human society according to the Mosaic document. A stimulating survey, which Schiller expanded in a number of essays, including *Über das Erhabene* ("Concerning the Sublime," 1791-5), it was noteworthy for the assertion that the moralistically free man could make his own decisions; he ruled supreme over the animals because of his ability to communicate, i.e., his language skill that reflected his state of evolution and refinement. Once Schiller had prepared his listeners, he proceeded from the general to the specific — from the mass of humanity to a specific individual, i.e., to Moses and his mission.

The manner in which he treated the subject of Moses and his mission to deliver the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt was noteworthy for Schiller's great care, respect and sensitivity not to offend religious sensibilities. He confessed that, without Judaism, as established by Moses, there would be no Christianity and no Mohammedanism. This indebtedness to Judaism, recognized by the German Enlightenment's concept of religious tolerance, was alluded to as Schiller proceeded to investigate the career of Moses in light of the Book of Exodus. Though it is improbable that he ever attended a Passover Seder, Schiller was an unusually perceptive and well-informed Gentile who, with empathy, was able to show that the persecution to which the Jews of Germany were exposed was a repetition of history that, for them, was a "struggle for freedom...a continuous struggle" begun initially in Egypt.

He linked Moses with "this nation," i.e., the Hebrews who, thanks to his work, "is able to maintain, as is its right, a great influence in world history." It was, therefore, providential, according to Schiller, that this down-trodden people was chosen to transmit "the truth, the light of truth, the noblest of possessions."

Schiller, who had been compelled to study medicine at the ducal academy, was able to understand why the Hebrews were oppressed by the Egyptians as the Book of Exodus relates. At the time of his lecture, Egyptology was not advanced enough, but it was known that the ancient Israelites suffered from leprosy. Looking around him, Schiller declared that the Israelites were penned in, they resided in the same confining area as that assigned to them, when, as a small tribe, they had come to Egypt. From a sanitary point of view such a policy — reminiscent of the ghettos of contemporary Germany — could only produce disease and hardship for both the stigmatized and the oppressors. And, instead of improving their living conditions, the persecution of the Hebrews grew worse until the Egyptians ordered the murder of all the newborn Hebrew males. The act of Moses' parents of placing little Moses in the reeds of the Nile River, where he might be discovered, as he was, by the Egyptian princess who saved him and had him raised as her own child, was perceived by Schiller as an act of desperation which was to redound to the advantage of the tyrannized Hebrews.

There were several puzzling questions to which Schiller sought answers. The Book of Exodus spoke of the rescue of the baby, Moses. Then, almost immediately, the adult Moses, seeing the barbarism of an Egyptian overseer tormenting Hebrew slaves, killed him, an action that caused Moses to take flight. What, Schiller wished to know, happened to Moses in the elapsed, unexplained years between his babyhood and his manhood? And Schiller imagined that Moses' education, once his Hebrew mother had brought him to the court, was in the hands of priests whose diligent pupil he became. He became familiar with their most intimate customs, rites and secrets and, since they assumed that Moses was going to join their ranks, they evidently informed him of the cult of a mysterious, invisible god, Yao, who was more powerful than any of the known gods. Apparently, Schiller was referring to the cult of Aton, established in prior years by the Pharaoh Akhenaton.

When Moses went into exile, he became, as Schiller asserts, a real Hebrew. Thereafter, he becomes not only the Biblical figure of *Moshe Rabbenu*. His development also becomes a psychological case study — a study that rivals the characterization of the heroes and heroines in his best known dramas. Moses became obsessed with the thought of delivering the Israelites from bondage — "I intend to redeem this people." While the classicist Schiller objected to nationalism *per se* — it was something for immature nations and for the youth of the world — he felt that Moses, the educator, had to utilize it to bring about the

liberation, and raise the dignity, outlook and self-esteem of the Hebrews. Thus, the idea of the one and only God who would bring unity to the people suggested itself to Moses. The idea that faith could and would move mountains was to be put into practice by Schiller when, subsequently, it came to writing down the action of some of his mature dramas. In this *Seelendrama* (spiritual drama), Moses, conscious of the immensity of the task confronting him, felt inadequate to cope with it. And then the invisible god, Yao, may have occurred to him. The question may have risen in his mind whether that invisible god could be adapted to satisfy the needs of the Israelites. Might it be possible to unite them under the banner of the one, indivisible, only and all-powerful God in a campaign of “national pride”? But fearful that his own physical handicap, his speech defect, might jeopardize any action that depended on his giving persuasive and forceful instructions, he held back. It was at that critical moment of Moses’ indecision that God spoke with him from the Burning Bush.

Schiller did not question that the interview with Him — “I am that I am” — really took place. Moses was prevailed on to become the messenger of God and, with the help of Aaron, the miracles, i.e., the ten plagues, would occur before the Pharaoh. The Exodus of the Children of Israel was to take place. That psychological analysis was Schiller’s scenario, which aimed to uphold the story of the Pentateuch as a matter of moral daring by Moses (and Aaron) in defying the tyrant, Pharaoh, or, in Bialik’s terms, the “moral duty of resistance to the murderers”⁵ of the Jews and a religious principle that is in line with Mann’s understanding of Schiller.⁶ Confidence in oneself generates faith in others. Modern archaeology⁷ tends to corroborate what Schiller supposed: the Biblical version of how Moses persuaded the Pharaoh to let his people go is now considered historically acceptable.

Subsequent to his appointment as a professor, Schiller declared, on 26 May 1789, that “a noble desire” ought to elevate us with “the great legacy of truth, morality and freedom that was handed down to us,” a tradition that should be passed on. The Mission of Moses, who helped to deliver the Children of Israel from bondage in Egypt, is certainly one such tradition. And if one can enlarge on this, then one may assume that especially two of Schiller’s dramas may have benefited from the author’s interest in Moses. The heroine (Joan of Arc) in *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* (“The Maid of Orleans,” 1802) who refers specifically to Moses, has, like him, a Divine vision. Thus, Schiller’s specific words (in English translation) as spoken by the heroine, Johanna,⁸ are:

For He Who unto Moses once descended
Amid the burning bush on Horeb’s height and bade him go to Pharaoh,...
He spoke out of the branches of this tree:
“Go, testify upon the earth to me.”

The other drama is *Wilhelm Tell* (1804), which was inspired by and reflected the individual enterprise and initiative that were so appealing to Zionists like the poet, Bialik. "We wish to be one single nation of brothers" (Act II, Sc. II). It was that view that attracted the poet Bialik in particular. He was inspired by it and "his own hopes for Jewish nationalism are reflected in his translation."⁹

NOTES

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2. Thomas Mann, "On Schiller" in *Last Essays*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston and Tania and James Stern (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), p. 22.
3. Cf. "Schiller und Mattich, der Jude," Report of "Schwäbische Schillerverein" reprinted in *Aufbau* (New York: May 27, 1955), p. 18.
4. Subsequent references follow the text of *Schillers Werke XVII, Nationalausgabe, "Historische Schriften"* 1, eds. I. Blumenthal, B. von Wiese, et al (Marbach and Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1970), p. 359f.
5. Nathan Ausubel, *The Book of Jewish Knowledge* (New York: Crown Publishers Inc., 1964), p. 207.
6. Thomas Mann, *Op. cit.*, p. 66.
7. Rick Gore, "Ramses the Great," *The National Geographic Magazine*, vol. 179, no. 4, April 1991: 19.
8. Friedrich von Schiller, *Mary Stuart, The Maid of Orleans. Two Historical Plays* (in one volume), a New Translation by Charles E. Passage (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1961), p. 15; the translation from Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* is mine.
9. David Aberbach, *Bialik* (London: Peter Halban Publishers Ltd., 1988), p. 101.

Worship and Redemption: Recovering Our Spiritual Vocabulary

IRA F. STONE

I

CONTEMPORARY JEWISH RELIGIOUS LIFE IS suffering a crisis in worship. Both for those seriously involved in the pursuit of religious life and for those attracted to Jewish rituals and practices by some ethnic or personal identity quest, theology, to the extent that it deals with the existence of God, is a minor problem. Large numbers of people admit to a belief in God. However, what worship is, and how to worship, confounds them. Through various imaginative insights of story, song and ritual, God's Presence has been felt and communicated, but the ultimate nature of our standing before this Presence is unclear. That there is a need for such a "standing before" is rejected. Yet, worship is the stance demanded before God in view of His and our existence.

The focus of our discussion and the source from which we intend to illuminate the meaning of Jewish worship is the liturgical ritual known variously as the *Amidah*, the *Shemoneh Esrei*, or *ha-Tefillah*. The *Amidah* (standing) — because this liturgy is recited standing, as opposed to the *Shema* and its blessings which can be recited while seated; the *Shemoneh Esrei* (eighteen) — because the liturgy as first composed consisted of eighteen units of blessing (*berakhot*); and *ha-Tefillah* (the prayer) — because this liturgy was understood as that single prayer which replaced the required daily sacrifices and is incumbent on every Jew daily. This distinguished it from the *Shema* (not technically a prayer at all) and from personal petitions (not liturgically required).

The recitation of the *Shema*, as an accompaniment to the performance of the daily sacrificial service, provided the model for the development of the post-Temple liturgy (Mishnah *Tamid* 5:1). As a liturgical act, the recitation of the *Shema* is distinct from (the act of) prayer. God is not addressed directly in the *Shema*. Rather, God addresses man at the very moment when man is attempting to perform those acts by which redemption may be achieved. The *Shema* is not a prayer. It is a recitation spoken as though God were speaking again to inform the meaning of a liturgy which included sacrifice but now includes elements which are understood as substitutes for sacrifice. Chief among these elements is the *Amidah*.

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II

By what right do we approach God? On what grounds do we imagine that the Infinite Life of the Universe can be attuned to our petitions? These are the unspoken questions which determine the opening statement of the *Amidah*. The first blessing establishes the theological basis on which our plea for redemption can go forward.

Submitting before You, Lord our God and God of our ancestors; God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob; great, powerful terrible God, God on high, He who is concerned in love with all He has created and remembers the lovingkindness of our ancestors and will bring a Redeemer to their children's children for the sake of His Name in love; He is King, Help, Saviour and Shield! Submitting before You, Lord, He who is shield of Abraham.

Submission before God is necessary but not sufficient grounds upon which to assert our claims *vis à vis* the Divine. We would never have had such claims to begin with had it not been for God's gift of His Presence to Abraham, and the subsequent gift of a covenant to concretize that Presence. Jewish tradition has long attempted to account for Abraham's coming to knowledge of God. The Midrash, which suggests that Abraham realized the limited nature of the heavenly bodies, and saw the foolishness of attributing to bodies and forces ultimate nature when they themselves were conditioned by forces in the universe, enlarges the role that human intellect plays in the process of knowing God in God's radical Oneness. But this is not what the Torah stresses. Rather, it is God, wholly unbidden and inexplicably, who makes Himself known to man. And the act by which God makes Himself known is an act (by Abraham) demanding submission: "*Lekh lekha*," go forth. Only because God has chosen to be Present to us can we approach in humility before Him. This is the lesson of the life of Isaac also, epitomized in *Akedat Yizhak*, the binding of Isaac. It is the lesson continued in the complexities of the life of Jacob. Man may wrestle with God, as Jacob did, but man's victory over God is the victory of learning to submit, to limp.

The first blessing suggests an answer to the question that it itself frames: "What is the link between the Infinite God, Who is beyond all description, and us? What explains the very existence of a world outside of the Godhead?" That answer, exemplified in the life of the patriarchs and the life of God, is *Hesed*. The "natural" result of God's Being is His loving concern for His creation. Our path to redemption is to imitate, like the patriarchs, that loving concern toward Him and, therefore, toward His creation.

What is redemption? What will a redeemed world look like? These are the questions taken up by the second and third blessings of the *Amidah*: *Gevurah* (strength) and *Kedushah* (holiness). Subsequent blessings will undertake to describe the human acts needed to serve as re-

demption's catalyst, as well as the more perplexing subject of what lies beyond redemption. From the human perspective, what is God's specifically unique aspect, most non-human power? What is the clearest gap between the human and the Divine? It is God's immortality and the concomitant ability to override the ravages of degeneration and death in the created world. We remain unredeemed, far from God, because we inhabit a material universe which is predicated on the presence of death and decay. Redemption, at its simplest level, is a world in which death has been conquered, a world impossible to imagine and certainly impossible to achieve, without the intervention of God. It is this power which we recognize in God, and this is the redemption that we pray for. Remembering that the *Amidah* itself is but a substitute for the rite of sacrifice at the Temple in Jerusalem, the connection between death, transcending death, and redemption, becomes even clearer. In the actual sacrifice, the abyss between the mortal and the immortal is directly encountered and symbolically overcome by the sharing of the moment of death with God. In the blessing of *Gevurah*, God's Power to redeem is expressly stated as being His Power to resurrect the dead.

You are eternally powerful, Lord; You resurrect (make live) the dead, and cause salvation to the multitudes. You sustain the living with loving concern, You make the dead come alive by virtue of Your great mercy, You are the lifter of those who fall, the healer of those who are sick, and the freer of those who are bound, and maintain Your faithfulness with those who sleep in the dust. Who is like You, Powerful Master, and who is similar to You, King, who makes the dead live and salvation flourish? We can have faith in You to make the dead live. Submitting before You, Lord, He who makes the dead live.

Six times in this blessing, God is described as the One Who makes the dead live. Twice that phenomenon is linked to the idea of salvation. God's relationship with the living is characterized again in terms of loving concern, support, and nurture. But that concern does not deter death. Salvation follows redemption, which is God's promise to the dead that they will live again. We will discuss below the difference between salvation and redemption, and how these terms can be understood in contemporary language, if at all. For now, it needs to be stressed that giving life to the dead is evidently a central tenet of our worship.

Can we imagine a life in which death is not a factor, a life beyond the life in redemptive time, beyond resurrection? Jewish tradition can, in the existence of the angels. Therefore, in order to learn what life will be like in the post-redemption world, let's call it the world to come — *Olam Haba*. The *Amidah* invites us to glimpse the life of the angels, and to draw us as close to that life as we can come in our unredeemed state. Our next blessing is the *Kedushah*, dealing with God's holiness, for we submit to God by joining the angels, and the entire universe

for that matter, in doing that for which all has been created, to proclaim God holy.

The *Kedushah* blessing is accompanied both by a short paragraph for recitation by the individual worshipper, and a long paragraph for public worship. The distinction is important. We will look first at the blessing itself in the context of the short paragraph, and contrast that with the context provided by the long paragraph.

You are Holy (wholly other and apart) and Your Name is Holy (that which we know of You, Your being in the world, Your Name, which is equally wholly other and apart), and the Holy Ones (the beings wholly other than we, the angels, beings who are free from death, beyond redemption) all day praise You. Submitting before You, Lord, He who is the Holy (totally other) God.

This blessing, as we have indicated, answers the question: what is it like beyond redemption? The first blessing establishes our right to ask for redemption. The second describes what redemption is, the power of God which it manifests. The third suggests what it will feel like beyond redemption. But alone, as individuals, we can only intellectually consider redemption. We can describe the experience, but we cannot participate in it. However, in community, the worship service allows for a symbolic transformation by which we can actually participate, imperfectly, in the universal chorus of praise of God which is the content of life beyond redemption. We choose the two most popular descriptions of the labor of angels, the visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel, and attempt, if only for a moment, to join them.

We recognize the wholly other nature of Your Name in this world, as the angels recognize it on high, as it is written by Your prophet: Wholly Other (i.e., separate, holy), Wholly Other, Wholly Other is the Lord of Heavenly Hosts, His Glory fills the land. These angels are answered by others opposite in submission, saying: Submit to the Glory of the Lord from His place. And, in words recognizing Your holy nature, we say: the Lord rules all, your God, Zion, from generation to generation — Praise God.

The paragraph concludes with an injunction that such praise of God is the ongoing task of human beings, implying, perhaps, that it is the labor most suited to life beyond redemption. This is followed by the blessing already described.

These first three blessing units of the *Amidah* are recited on every occasion when the *Amidah* is said. They explain our warrant to appear before God, our request, and what the experience of the granting of that request would feel like. But the request has not been granted. The next thirteen blessings consider the ways by which we worshippers might create the necessary conditions for redemption and salvation to occur. There are exceptions to this movement forward in the liturgy. One day a week, and on a number of other special occasions during the year, on Sabbaths and Festivals, we are enjoined to participate in an

extended symbol of redemption. *Shabbat* and the Festivals are intended to be a more prolonged taste of the world beyond redemption. It would contradict this extended metaphor for redemption to give voice in our worship on those days to our unredeemed state. Therefore, on *Shabbat* and Festivals, one blessing, dealing with the nature of the special day, replaces the thirteen blessings (involving requests of God) that we are about to consider.

III

What are the basic building blocks of redemption? How does a human being first become sensitive to the need for redemption and then to the path to redemption? Only by way of knowledge, in its widest possible understanding. Intelligence, experience, discernment, insight — without these tools, without our intellectual apparatus and the ability to reflect on our experience, we are not human. Non-humans have a role to play in creation, but it is not our role. Ours is to choose to develop from unredeemed life to redemption. This cannot be done without knowledge. Therefore, we approach God, the Source of all knowledge, recognizing that intellectual ability is a gift from God that is implicit in creation. We recognize simultaneously that the greatest impediment to our properly using this gift of knowledge is our tendency to credit its provenance to ourselves. Intellectual hubris undermines our quest for redemption as surely as intellectual sloth. Therefore, we say:

Submitting before You, Lord, He Who is the graceful giver of knowledge.

Where do we find this gift of knowledge? In the Scriptures, which are the meeting ground of Divine Wisdom and human intellect. With what are the Scriptures largely concerned? The proper worship of God, our way of being in the world, to effect redemption. What, then, do we require to effect redemption? A return to Torah, the source of our knowledge, and to the redemptive sacrificial worship for which this liturgy is but a substitute. How can such a return be accomplished? Through repentance: We must repent of our reliance on our own knowledge in place of the gift of knowledge provided by the Torah, which caused the destruction of our primary access for drawing near to God.

Submitting before You, Lord, He Who desires repentance.

Having recognized the need for repentance, we repent! We move from the intellectual to the experiential, and say:

Forgive us, Father, for we have sinned. Release us, our King, for we have transgressed. For You are a Forgiver and Redeemer. Submitting before You, Lord, He Who is graceful in multiplying forgiveness.

On the basis of this heartfelt act of penitence, we plead before

God that He be aware of the pain that we experience at having forsaken Him. We recognize our inability to escape the world of pain, decay and death without His help. We pray for a redeemer. We have been working up to this moment, and it is something of a climax:

Perceive our troubles, struggle in our struggles and redeem us speedily in recognition of Your Presence in the world, for You are a mighty redeemer. Submitting before You, Lord, He Who redeems Israel.

What are our struggles? What is the nature of our material shortcomings that must be overcome to provide the context for redemption? What is it, specifically, that we want the Redeemer to do? This is the subject of the next seven blessings. Our first need is health. Life in this world is categorically unredeemed as long as we suffer the ills of the body. We may desire to be free of the material life, but the conditions for attaining such freedom require, first of all, a material life in stasis. A life in which death is overcome must also be a life in which bodily deterioration is overcome. It is at this point that we must more clearly differentiate between the terms "redemption" and "salvation." God seems to have the power both to redeem and to save. Redemption, defined as the resurrection of the dead, the conquest of death, seems to be distinguishable from salvation which will follow this redemption. This is the idea of a two-step understanding of eschatology that Maimonides articulated in his "Essay on Resurrection." I believe that Maimonides' view of this two-stage process, in fact, derives from the two notions expressed in the *Amidah* as the legitimate belief of the framers of the liturgy. Salvation, the transformation of life from a material base to a spiritual base, was unthinkable without a period in which such a transformation could be, so to speak, earned. Unredeemed, ordinary life did not allow for such a period. Resurrection of the dead became essential in order to return the world to the pristine stasis of Eden, after which salvation, the ultimate goal of creation, could follow. Our prayer for good health is an extension of this notion. As our bodies deteriorate, we literally feel the evidence of our unredeemed state. When we pray for healing, we are praying for that visceral sign that redemption has begun; not only will the dead be returned to life, but those in life will end their inexorable march to death. (Note Mishnah *Avot* 4:22: "Those who are born are destined to die; the dead are destined to be resurrected; the resurrected are destined for judgment.")

Submitting before You, Lord, He Who heals the sick of His people Israel.

Similarly, we want the redeemer to insure the productivity of the earth, because the attainment of a life worthy of redemption requires that our material needs be met, and, because, in redeemed time, our bodies, resurrected or not, will need to suffer no material wants. The difficulty of the harvest is a symbol for unredeemed life. The curse of life lived outside of the Garden of Eden is the difficulty with which

the land will be made to yield its produce. A good year is a harbinger of redemption.

Submitting before You, Lord, He Who blesses the years [of His people with bounty].

These, then, are the signs of our freedom. Our bodies will be healthy, they will not decay. Food will be plentiful, and the people of Israel will return from exile to enjoy the redemption in their land. In this land, the administration of public life will be governed by our judges as of old, and God Himself will rule, dispensing the purity of His loving concern, mercy and judgment.

Submitting before You, Lord, He Who causes His people Israel to be collected from the diaspora . . . Submitting before You, Lord, He Who loves righteousness and judgment.

Redemption requires the elimination of evil and the restoration of goodness; God's judgment is called down upon those whose false beliefs are an impediment to the redemption and cannot be expected to live on into the redeemed time. In a blessing added after the destruction of the Second Temple, as a response to the presence of various sectarians, many of whom were informers for the Roman authorities in the Jewish community, God is timelessly invoked as the judge and executioner of all those whose evil actions and rebellion against God are an impediment to redemption. In the blessing which follows, God's mercy is invoked for all of the righteous teachers in Israel whose work will have helped the redemption come about.

Submitting before You, Lord, He Who breaks his enemies and humbles the arrogant . . . Submitting before You, Lord, support and trust of the righteous.

Finally, if all of these conditions were to come to be, if redemptive time were established by a redeemer who would overcome death and physical decay, sustain our bodies in plenty, restore our judges, punish our enemies, and reward our pious teachers, then we could move from redemptive time to salvation. The seed of David would sprout in a spiritually rebuilt and functioning Jerusalem, bringing with it an end to the material world, even the material world redeemed.

Submitting before You, Lord, He Who builds Jerusalem . . . Submitting before You, Lord, He Who causes the horn of salvation to flourish.

IV

This brings us to the last of the customary blessings, those recited on non-sabbaths and festivals: "Hear our prayer," followed by the closing three blessings, recited on all occasions. We will look first at the special nature of the last of the customary blessings, and then the final three.

The sixteenth blessing of the daily *Amidah*, and the last of the daily thirteen middle blessings, is the moment when worship and our more personal notion of prayer meet. To all intents and purposes, the sacrificial substitute is completed when it brings us to the salvation beyond redemption which is the aspiration of the act of prayer. It now becomes incumbent on the liturgy to express the heartfelt prayer that the theological risk that we have engaged in, by substituting words for sacrifice in worship, will be heard. For that to happen, God will have to shower mercy on us and — by virtue of that mercy — accept our prayer as worship. We fervently believe that God is synonymous with mercy, with loving concern for us, and that He will accept our penitent approach; He will not send us away empty.

Submitting before You, Lord, He Who hears prayer.

One may ask: why is this blessing recited only on ordinary days? Do we not pray that God will accept our words as worship when offered on Sabbaths and Festivals? No. On Sabbaths and Festivals our offering is made in “the taste of the world to come,” that is, redeemed time. In redeemed time, we *know* that our offerings, prayers and sacrifices both, will be accepted. Thus, the first of the three closing blessings, which is recited on Sabbaths and Festivals as well as ordinary days, does not request that our substitute sacrifice be accepted, but requests that God accept our actual sacrifices in an actual Temple and a restored Temple service. In redeemed time there is no need to apologize for substitutes. Of course, this restoration can occur only in our land. Thus, the acceptance of sacrifice and the re-building of the Temple are predicated on the return of God’s Presence to the land. Notice that an earlier blessing, number seven, dealt with *our* return to the land. The present one deals with the *return of God’s Presence* to the land, a different issue.

Submitting to You, Lord, He Who returns His Presence to Zion.

The anticipated return of God’s Presence to Israel engenders the outpouring of thanksgiving, joy and praise which must accompany the successful offering of the sacrifice. Death has been overcome. We have lived through the vicarious experience of death and resurrection, and come to salvation. The exact words of the thanksgiving paragraph and its blessing are crucial at this juncture:

We are thankful to You that You are Lord,
The God of our ancestors eternally,
Rock of our lives, Shield of our salvation are You.
From generation to generation
We will thank You and tell Your praises,
For our lives that are given into Your hand,
And our souls that are given on pledge to You.
And for Your miracles that are with us every day,
Your wonders and Your goodness at all times,
Evening, morning, and noon.

He Who is good, Your mercies never end,
 And He Who is merciful, Your loving concern never ends.
 You have ever been our hope.
 For all this we submit before You
 And exalt Your Name, our King, eternally.
 All the living will thank You,
 They will praise Your name in truth, God,
 Our salvation and help.
 Submitting before You, Lord,
 He of the Good Name, to You it is fitting to give thanks.

This blessing is of post-sacrificial content. It is ambiguous in that the sense of having achieved a symbolic salvation alternates with the obvious fact that we have not achieved salvation, and the awesome fact that we remain constantly subject to God's power and will. It intimates that we will live as though we have achieved salvation, giving thanks to God for the symbolic salvation already wrought and the actual salvation yet expected.

With the sacrificial service completed, the priests turn to bless the people before the people leave the sacred precincts. It is important to note that the first three blessings of the *Amidah* take place before the sacrifice, the last three after it. In between are those blessings that constitute the sacrifice itself. After the blessing of thanksgiving, then, the Priestly Blessings are pronounced:

May the Lord bless you and protect you.
 May the Lord's Presence be upon you in love.
 May the Lord's Presence be upon you in Peace.

This invocation leads to the final blessing, which leads to the prayer for peace in every *Amidah*, *Sim Shalom* (Grant peace):

Submitting before You, Lord, He Who blesses
 His people Israel with peace.

V

Our concern must now shift focus. The specific eschatological vision of rabbinic Judaism is unarguable. The question which we must face is: Is this, or any eschatological vision, appropriate for contemporary Jews? We begin with two complementary facts. First, average Jewish lay people sincerely believe that Jews do not believe in life beyond death. They believe, in fact, that this non-belief is one of the crucial differences between Christianity and Judaism. Second, many Jewish religious leaders have, for over a century, rejected belief in life beyond death as irrational. They believed that such irrational tenets were not consonant with their attempts to show to the non-Jewish world that Jews were not a backward people. They believed that this was necessary in order for Jews to become accepted in the modern world. They may have been correct. For understandable historical and sociological reasons,

nineteenth and twentieth century Jews hitched their wagons to the seeming ascent of a new rationalism. Even those who modified their rationalism with a more existential phenomenology remained firmly committed to the idea that the human intellect is the measure of all things. This rationalism seemed to flow naturally out of the Jewish commitment to the use of the intellect, to learning and to reason. But pre-modern Jewish rationalism — of Maimonides, for example, and, we believe, of the rabbis — operated to show man what he could not know — what had to be, so to speak, left to God. The new rationalism embraced by Jews asserted that man could know all. What man could not know was not worth knowing. Life beyond death is a subject that must be taboo to modern rationalism. It places God instead of man at the center of experience. That Jewish liturgy and tradition fairly shout their concern with redemption was successfully rationalized: redemption became a metaphor for this-worldly political and social perfection. That such perfection proved over and over to be impossible was no impediment. That the liturgy and tradition clearly defined redemption in terms of life beyond death was simply ignored. It was translated out of existence.

In contrast to these two facts, another fact needs to be considered. The desire for the natural solace that the idea of redemption contributes to life, and the meaning with which it suffuses life, have not abated. The question, still one of the most common for the contemporary rabbi even when phrased negatively, i.e.: “Jews don’t believe in life after death, do they?” continues to surface in people’s consciousness. What choice is there? Either the question, which is at the heart of the loss of meaning in modern life, surfaces and is explored, or we are consigned to life that is limited by the shrinking vision of mundane humanity. Redemption, even including resurrection of the dead, is natural. Its denial is not, and corrupts the grandeur of the human spirit.

We will begin our consideration of redemption by placing it at the heart of worship. We will place worship at the heart of religious life, and the inability to worship at the heart of the secular vision. We will assert that the secular vision, defined as the inability to worship, is destructive of human potential, the stability of society and the life of the natural world itself. We will try to persuade that it is possible to regain the experience of true worship, but only by reappropriating the language of redemption.

VI

Worship originates in God. That is to say, that the creation includes in it a being, man, who does not *automatically* join in the universal chorus of praise of God which the natural world offers by its very existence. Man must *choose* to do so. We cannot know why this is so beyond knowing that the nature of the creation calls for it to be so. The terms of

this choice are made known to us by the necessary apprehension of it by the prophet. That God is totally Unique, that He cannot be translated into symbols or flesh, or limited being, is the content of the gift of prophecy. God revealed what God is not, and called upon man to worship that which he cannot comprehend, that which God is. The state of worship that this charge leads to, is a worship which transforms the world of man into, or back into, the world of God. But in the perfect world of redeemed time, men will be free to pursue perfect worship and attain, finally, salvation. This is the ideal goal of worship: salvation. But salvation can be pursued only after redemption. For us, then, redemption is the focus of worship. The need for redemption presupposes that we have not managed to worship — to be in the world in relation to God — adequately. We have not loved God enough with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our might. Therefore, the world has malfunctioned, and we must approach God in a penitent fashion in order to secure a redeemer to put the world right. This posture of penitence requires submission to God in all matters, intellectual, emotional and physical. The posture opposed to this, which affirms the unlimited power of human beings, and the unlimited importance of the self in a non-covenantal existence, the classic impediments to worship, the seeds of narcissism and idolatry, remain the impediment to worship today.

VII

The quintessential modern predicament is two-fold. Emptiness of the person and destruction of the environment, both moral and physical. The first derives from the individual's inability to transcend his or her death. The second derives from the unlimited reign given to human power, intellectual and material. The centrality of the vision of redemption and salvation to true Jewish worship is the antidote for both. But how can the contemporary Jew be led to this conclusion? Must it be accepted on the basis of faith? We do not believe so. On the contrary, simple faith demeans the human spirit. Redemption ennobles it. A rigorous application of man's crowning faculty, his reason, ought to lead one to conclude that a vision of redemption is not only desirable but also reasonable. Notwithstanding our disappointment with human behavior and a renewed respect for the gifts of the animal world, human consciousness is still a remarkable phenomenon. We think, we speak, we create, and, one hopes, within limits, we master our environment. These powers ought, even today, to evoke in us the sense of the presence of a reality not reducible to the sum of our physical parts. We need our bodies for these activities; but, as a necessary condition for intellectual life, is the body also a sufficient condition? We think not, and we think most people think not. That part of ourselves

which is not the sum of our parts, which lends meaning to our existence by transcending it, transcends death by definition.

Thus, the first of our predicaments is reasonably avoided: our personhood is not empty. It transcends the painful limits of this life. But if it does so as spirit, of what importance is the body and, by extension, the physical world itself? By understanding that the ultimate perfection of our spirits can take place only embodied and in a physical world, we avoid the trap of deprecating the body or the world. Such a deprecation is anathema to Jewish tradition generally. Our very existence as embodied spirits makes no sense unless the purpose of that embodiment and the purpose of the material world itself is to play an essential role in the goal of that existence. Life, material life, is unreasonable solely as an impediment to meaning. On the contrary, it must lend something important to the quest for such meaning. Otherwise, we must conclude that whatever God we conceive acts to block our reaching the goals that He has established for us. The proper functioning of the universe and our material part of that universe is too important to be incidental to the meaning of the universe itself. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that our bodies are essential to our ability to perfect our nature, that, in the world which we know, those bodies do not function adequately to provide the opportunity for that perfection, and, therefore, an embodied life beyond death is also reasonable in order that we might properly fulfill our spiritual goals in that body. Thus, resurrection precedes salvation; both are necessary and both are reasonable, properly understood.

We do not expect that these arguments will win over vast numbers of supporters. However, we are convinced that they are clearly articulated by the best of the Jewish spiritual vocabulary. We suggest that there are people looking for just such a vocabulary, and they have not encountered it in the intellectually deadening and aesthetically impoverished state where Jewish worship is today encountered. We believe that there are Jews looking to learn how to worship because they intuit that worship is at the heart of humanity's purpose, a purpose that points beyond itself to redemption and to ultimate salvation.

The Ritual and the Concept of Havdalah

ZVI A. YEHUDA

The Term *Havdalah* and its Significance

THE HEBREW WORD, *HAVDALAH*, MEANS division, differentiation, distinction. This concept is focal in the Jewish outlook. There can be no creative accomplishment, be it in art, science or thought, and no sense of uniqueness, whether personal or communal, without keen appreciation and judicious application of *Havdalah* — of discrimination, partition and delineation.

In the Torah, the idea of *Havdalah* appears as a leading theme in two of its major subjects: the creation of the universe (its first account)¹ and the consecration of the people (in laws regarding Israel's sanctity).² Encompassing Torah's cosmological scope and national emphasis, these two topics feature *Havdalah* as a powerful tool of achievement and recognition, both Divine and human.³

Seven Divine *Havdalot* — partitions, distinctions — are specified in the Torah, as enumerated in a Tannaitic source:⁴ (1) Between *kodesh* and *hol*;⁵ namely, between the unique and the ordinary, the particular versus the regular. The popular contrasting terms, "sacred" for *kodesh* and "profane" for *hol*, are imprecise and mostly misleading; as will be demonstrated later; *kodesh* and *hol* are relative, not antithetical terms, pointing to operational, not intrinsic qualities, and signify hierarchical, not absolute categories.⁶ (2) Between light and darkness.⁷ (3) Between Israel and the nations.⁸ (4) Between the impure (*tameh*) and the pure (*tahor*).⁹ (5) Between the celestial and the terrestrial waters.¹⁰ (6) Between Levites and Israelites.¹¹ (7) Between *Kohanim* (Priests) and Levites.¹²

In Jewish liturgy, the *Havdalah* benediction (*ha-mavdil*) which is recited at the end of the Sabbath and the festivals, articulates only three of the seven distinctions explicit in the Torah: between *kodesh* and *hol*; light and darkness; Israel and the nations. In remarkable inventiveness, however, the Sages have injected into the liturgy an additional distinction, "between the Seventh Day and the six days of work." This one Divine *Havdalah* relating to *Shabbat* — the very core and reason of the entire *Havdalah* practice, and the essence of its liturgy — is, intriguingly enough, not explicit in the Torah.

Concluding the first creation account, the Torah attests that God has

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“blessed” (*berakh*; enriched, endowed) and “hallowed” (*vaye-kaddesh*; signified, dignified) the Seventh Day.¹³ In no place does the Torah ever use the term *Havdalah* for *Shabbat*. Nonetheless, the Sages do. Apparently, they perceived the Torah’s terms, “blessed” and “hallowed,” to indicate separation and distinction. This clearly illustrates the Rabbinic view that *kiddush* (sanctification) and *Havdalah* (distinction) are intrinsically synonymous and interchangeable. The liturgical announcement of the Divine separation (*Havdalah*) between *Shabbat* and weekdays — indicative of characteristic Rabbinic ingenuity — is implicit in the Divine consecration of *Shabbat*, as well as its celebration by the people, and is crucial to the whole idea of the *Havdalah* ceremony.

Two Facets/Stages of the *Havdalah*

The *Havdalah* ritual/liturgy is conducted in two phases: By a liturgical insertion recited as part of the evening *Amidah* prayer, at the end of *Shabbat* and festivals (*bi-tefilah*); and as an elaborate ceremonial composition, dramatically performed over a cup of wine (*al ha-kos*).

These two configurations of *Havdalah* date back to the days of the Great Assembly at the start of the Second Temple period (5th-4th centuries B.C.E.), who instituted [the rules and formulae of] *berakhot* (blessings), *tefilot* (prayers), *kedushot* (consecrations), and *havdalot* (distinctions). The formative development of the two phases of *Havdalah*, largely shrouded in mystery, is claimed, in Rabbinic sources, to have been influenced by economic considerations. In impoverished times, when Jews could not afford wine for both *Kiddush* and *Havdalah*, the liturgical *Havdalah* in the *Amidah* prayer prevailed; in more prosperous times, the ceremonial *Havdalah* on the cup was instituted.¹⁴ Subsequently, both phases have prevailed concurrently. As the established custom now appears, *Havdalah* is first integrated within the evening *Amidah* prayer at the Sabbath’s conclusion (*Moza’ei Shabbat Aravit*). Then, the dramatic ceremony over the wine is performed at home and/or in the synagogue.

The first facet/stage of *Havdalah* consists of pure liturgy: a formula inserted within the fourth benediction of the *Amidah*, which is an appeal for “wisdom, insight and understanding” (*hokhmah, binah, da’at*), starting with “You grant the human being understanding” (“*Attah honen la-adam da’at. . .*”). Within the texture of this remarkable (and patently Jewish) appeal to God for human intellect, demonstratively posted as the primary human need, we express our awareness of the distinction between *Shabbat* and weekdays (“*Attah honantanu. . .*”).

Why is the *Havdalah* at the *tefilah* stage incorporated within this Wisdom benediction? Two reasons are given in the two Talmuds:

The Babylonian Talmud offers a legal-formal explanation:¹⁵ Since *Attah Honen* is the first blessing in the *Amidah* which is recited on weekdays, it demonstrates the transition from the special day of *Shabbat* to the mun-

dane weekdays. The moment when we face this differentiation liturgically in our worship, we signify it with the recitation of the *Havdalah* blessing. The first three *Amidah* blessings (*Avot*, *Gevurot*, *Kedushat Hashem*), being adorations, are recited every day, *Shabbat* and festivals included, but the following blessings, which are, in essence, supplications, are recited only on weekdays, but not on *Shabbat* or festivals, in order not to mar the joyfulness of the day. At the close of *Shabbat*, however, we are permitted, even expected, to appeal to God for our needs (the first and foremost of which is, in Rabbinic view, wisdom). But, before doing so, and engaging in a non-*Shabbat* activity, one is required first to recite *Havdalah*.

The Jerusalem Talmud offers a more philosophical-symbolic explanation:¹⁶ *Havdalah* — the cognitive exercise of distinction, discernment, discrimination — is a manifestation and outcome of *da'at* — wisdom, awareness, perception, insight. For “without *da'at*, wherefrom will *Havdalah* come?!” One first appeals for *da'at* before reciting *Havdalah*. Thus, we learn that *Havdalah* — as a human spiritual and intellectual experience — is not only emulative of the way of God, in His creation of the universe and election of Israel; not only a potent protection of the people's distinction; but, also, the mark and source of human wisdom.

The second facet/stage of the *Havdalah* entails a ceremony over wine. Customarily performed both at home and in the synagogue, it is an elaborate, dramatic composition. As the custom later developed, it is preceded by an introductory verse from *Hallel*, “I carry ‘a cup of deliverances’ (*kos yeshuot*), as I call on the name of Hashem!”¹⁷ In context, the “cup of deliverances” appears as a metaphoric reference to the constant flow of God's blessings; it is the “vessel” of God's daily providential provisions which the worshipper figuratively “carries” with him as he turns to, and calls on, God in gratitude. He “carries” this figurative “cup” existentially, through his life experiences: spiritually, within himself, and ritually, when he is holding a cup of wine, symbolic of the Divine “cup of deliverances.” As prelude to the *Havdalah*, the “cup of deliverances” alludes more concretely to the tangible cup of wine held by the worshipper as he performs the ritual and recites the blessings. The verse thus serves a dual purpose; it both introduces and explains the opening part of the ritual — Wine.

Augmenting the “cup of deliverances” verse, the *Havdalah*, as developed later in Ashkenazic communities, starts with a more elaborate selection of auspicious, uplifting verses, starting with a liturgical verse from Isaiah, “Behold the God of my deliverance! I am confident and fearless!” (*Hinne El yeshuati*).¹⁸ In a subtly argumentative and remonstrative gesture, this verse reverberates the “cup of deliverances” verse: The “*El Yeshuati*” (“God of my deliverance;” or, “my God of deliverance”) stands in a contrast of clarification and qualification to the “*kos yeshuot*” (“cup of deliverances”): Deliverance is thereby attributed to God alone, not to any vessel or intermediate.

Following this charmingly edifying bouquet of Biblical verses, come four blessings — among which only the fourth one is the *Havdalah* proper (*ha-mavdil*) — in this order: Wine (*Yayin*), Spices (*Besamim*), Light (*Ner*), and *Havdalah*. It has been noted that, as a mnemonic sign, their Hebrew acronym, *YVNH*, comprises the name *Yavneh* (the post-destruction Torah center in Israel).¹⁹

The first two blessings are, in essence, “ordinary” *birkhot ha-nehenin* (“pleasure benedictions”), recited regularly before any enjoyable consumption of edible substances — whether in worship or not — thanking God for providing sources of human gratification. Whenever a Jew is about to drink wine or smell spices, he is expected first to recite the appropriate *berakhah*, in gratitude to God, as the source of all worldly blessings and provisions. Thus, there is nothing particularly “*havdalic*” — or related to the departure of the Sabbath — in the formulae and recitation of these first two blessings of the *Havdalah* ceremony: over wine (*yayin*) and over spices (*besamim*). What we want to know, however, is why do we include the consumption of wine and spices and, hence, their corollary blessings, within the drama of *Havdalah*?

Wine is treated in Jewish ritual as both source and symbol of human joy; it dignifies and solemnizes the occasion. The Psalms verse from *Hallel*, added at the start of the *Havdalah*, “I will lift up the cup of salvation, / And call upon the name of the Lord,” aims to elucidate this point.²⁰ The carrying of the cup by the worshipper concurs with, and embellishes, his devotional calling on the name of God. It illustrates that the cup serves to enhance the ritual, not the ritual to “bless” (or “consecrate”) the cup. This theological clarification is crucial; it comes to disclaim and dispel any pagan notions of the metaphysical or “sacramental” role that might be attributed to the cup of wine in Jewish worship. The wine represents human joy, not Divine attributes. It also ties in the *Havdalah* ritual with the *kiddush*, both performed over wine, thus closing the circle of Sabbath consecration.

The incorporation of spices within the *Havdalah* ceremony is mentioned in passing in the Mishnah as an old established fact.²¹ Enigmatically, however, this perplexing custom — unique and without a parallel in Jewish ritual — is given no explanation or rationale in early Rabbinic sources. In later sources (from the 12th century on) a remarkable psychological insight is introduced as the reason for the inclusion of spices within the *Havdalah*, phrased in two variants:

The *Tosafot* school (Talmudic commentators in France and Germany) present the idea in mystical-metaphysical terms: The spices serve as a restorative remedy for the loss of the “additional soul” (*neshamah yeterah*) which the Jew, according to Rabbinic lore, experiences during *Shabbat*, as he indulges in the day’s physical and spiritual delights.²² Maimonides presents a similar idea in his typical, rational style: “Since the mind is saddened at the departure of *Shabbat*, we cheer and gladden it with fragrant

spices.”²³ As the Jew is about to forego his “Sabbatical” extra-vitality, facing the sorrow of the day’s departure, he lifts up his spirit with the fragrances of pleasant spices.

The association between the *Havdalah* spices and the “*neshamah yeterah*” concept, originated among Ashkenazic sages, and has its roots in the rabbinic evaluation of spices as sustaining the spirit (*neshamah*) rather than the body (*guf*).²⁴ Focusing on the final verse of Psalms (150:6), “Let all the ‘*neshamah*’ (all that breathes) praise Hashem,” the Rabbis deliberate, “What is that which the ‘*neshamah*’ enjoys, but the ‘*guf*’ does not? It is the aroma of spices!” The common rendition of “*neshamah*” as soul and “*guf*” as body, particularly in this context, is poignantly misleading. The term *neshamah* in the Psalms verse is understood by the Sages to refer to breathing (inhalation, from *neshimah*); *guf*, in contrast, refers to the physiological, digestive system: The fragrance of spices is imbibed by inhalation, by *neshamah*, and is not consumed by the stomach (*guf*) as food or drink.

The common allegation that the joy of smelling is more spiritual than the joy of eating or drinking is merely poetic, and is certainly not indicated by the talmudic saying. Keenly aware of the psychosomatic phenomenon, Nahmanides insightfully remarks that the smelling of spices is, nonetheless, akin to eating and drinking, in that it physically penetrates and sustains the body; hence, it no less requires a blessing for physical pleasure.²⁵ It is noteworthy that, among Sefardic communities, the smelling of spices is customary during the Sabbath (presumably in order to complete the desirable number of “a hundred blessings a day”). As we bid farewell to the precious day of *Shabbat*, we still endeavor to cling to its exhilarating aroma, symbolized by the *besamim* of the *Havdalah*.

Blessing over fire (*ner/esh*) The one uniquely “*havdalic*” blessing before the final *Havdalah* proper blessing is on “the lights of the fire” (*me’orei ha-esh*). It is recited over a manifold, torch-like, flame derived from a plaited, multi-wicked candle — representing a fusion of light and fire — symbol of human enlightenment and enterprise. This blessing is recited only within the context of the *Havdalah* ritual, and is clearly related to the overall experience of the conclusion of *Shabbat*. Fire is a powerful tool for human productivity, industry and labor. Fire may not be kindled on *Shabbat*.²⁶ Now, as *Shabbat* ends, we enter the world of human creativity and enterprise, fulfilling our role as God’s partners in cultivating the universe. This is symbolized by the *Havdalah* fire.

In Greek mythology, Prometheus had to steal the fire from the begrudging, malevolent gods, and he was punished for his audacity. In contrast, Jewish tradition views fire — and the ability of human beings to create, control and utilize it — as a Divine gift. This idea is illustrated in a fascinating Talmudic legend: At the end of the first *Shabbat*, God granted wisdom to the first Adam, enabling him to invent and produce fire; thereupon he recited the blessing on “the lights of fire” in thanksgiving for this Divine gift.²⁷ Here, too, we see the connection between the two themes,

Wisdom (*da'at*) and *Havdalah*. Fire, the focal symbol of the *Havdalah*, is the result of wisdom, God's gift to humanity.

Also, the *Havdalah* lights at the close of *Shabbat* parallel the kindled lights at its beginning — with a striking contrast: The flaming fire of the *Havdalah* candle-stick (of intermingled wicks [*avukot*]) varies from the placid glow of the *Shabbat* candles (each of a single wick [*ner*]). The blazing lights of fire at the departure of *Shabbat* presage a week of industry and creativity; the tranquil lights which welcome *Shabbat* herald the anticipated day of rest, to be conducted in domestic peace.

The final *Havdalah* blessing (*hamavdil*) is liturgically the *Havdalah* proper. It mentions four distinctions: *kodesh* versus *hol* (holy or consecrated versus secular); light versus darkness; Israel versus other nations; the Seventh day versus the six days of work. The blessing's conclusion (its "signature") reiterates the first distinction of *kodesh/hol*, distinguishing between the extraordinary and the ordinary.

This final distinction is quintessential, encompassing all others. Rabbi Yehuda Ha-Nasi (Mishnah redactor), in his *Havdalah*, recited only this distinction.²⁸ The climactic point of the *Havdalah* as well as its conceptual kernel is, thus, the appreciation and enhancement of *kedushah*.

In the Hebrew mind, *kedushah* (consecration) is related to separation and apartness. Because of the tremendous impact of the Western way of thinking and articulation, which recognizes no relation between the notion of sanctity and the act of division, we tend, however, to ignore the inherent interconnectedness between *Havdalah* and *kedushah*, and the parallel correlation between *Havdalah* and *Kiddush*. Properly viewed, the two rituals are two sides of one coin: the consecration of *Shabbat*.

The Correlation Between *Havdalah* and *Kiddush*

Conceptually, both rituals, *Kiddush* and *Havdalah*, are based on one precept, stemming from a single Torah verse:²⁹ "*Zakhor* — Remember the day of *Shabbat*, *le-kaddesho* — to actuate/experience its *kedushah*!" The verse, as a whole, calls us to recognize, appreciate, cherish, realize, enhance and express the *kedushah*, the distinctiveness and uniqueness of *Shabbat*. The key words are *zakhor* and *le-kaddesho*, remembrance and distinction, which, in essence, are interrelated. We remember (*zakhor*) that which is prominent, esteemed and distinguished (*kadosh*).

The verb "*zakhor*" (to remember) in the Exodus version of the Decalogue has been compared in Rabbinic literature to "*shamor*" (to observe) in the Deuteronomic version; both, however, may be taken as synonymous, *zakhor* urging us "to be mindful," and *shamor* "to keep in mind" (compare *shamar* in Gen. 37:11).

As understood in Rabbinic tradition, however, *zakhor* assumes a special connotation. It implies actualized remembrance, assertive mindfulness, encompassing both mental awareness and oral pronouncement —

reinforcing emotional involvement with active participation. How do we “remember” the Sabbath Day? “With words,” say the Sages³⁰ — by verbal announcement of the day’s uniqueness. Semantically, the verb “*zakhor*” also means to mention, to point out, to declare. Thus, Maimonides projects both rituals, *Kiddush* and *Havdalah*, as two aspects of one *mizvah*, in his *Sefer Ha-Mizvot*:³¹

This *mizvah* is: To recite words, at the entrance (*kenisah*) and the exit (*yeziyah*) of the Sabbath, mentioning the extraordinary significance and prominence of the day and its distinction from the ordinary weekdays which precede and follow it. The Scriptural source is the verse, “*Zakhor . . . le-kaddesho*” (Ex. 20:8), meaning: commemorate the Sabbath day by proclaiming its lofty uniqueness; as explained in the *Mekhilla*, “Express (mention; “*zakhor*”) the Day’s uniqueness (sanctity; “*le-kaddesho*”) by [reciting] a blessing;” and, as the Sages specify, “over wine.”

They further elaborate (B. *Pesahim* 106a) on the verb “*le-kaddesho*” (meaning “to proclaim its *kedushah*,” to declare its uniqueness): “*Kaddeshehu bi-khenisato*” — announce the day’s *kedushah* on its arrival (on Friday night); referring to *kiddush* — and “*Kadeshehu bi-yeziato*” — do the same on its departure (on Saturday night); referring to *Havdalah*, which is part of our duty to recall the Sabbath’s *kedushah*.

In the same vein, Maimonides introduces the *Havdalah* ritual in conjunction with the *kiddush* concept in his Code:³²

It is an obligatory precept to express the uniqueness of *Shabbat* in words; as it says “*Zakhor* [remember] the day of *Shabbat*, *le-kaddesho* [to express its *kedushah*]!” (Ex. 20:8); you shall memorialize [the day] by observing it as a day of rest (*Shabbat*) and announcing its sanctity (*Kiddush*).³³ One ought to remember the day on its arrival and on its departure. On its arrival, by *Kiddush Hayyom*; on its departure, by *Havdalah*.

The commemoration of *Shabbat* [*zekhirat Shabbat*, from *zakhor*] entails, according to Maimonides, a dual obligation: actually to observe it as a day of rest, and orally to pronounce its sacredness. By both resting (verb, *shabbat*) and reciting the *Kiddush*, we experience and proclaim the prominence and distinctiveness of the day — its *kedushah*. As we clearly see from Maimonides’ style, *Kiddush* and *Havdalah* parallel and complement each other. Both, in conjunction, create a dramatically impressive demarcation of the precious day, from start to end.

By the “sanctification” of the *Kiddush* ceremony we set the borders which “separate” the preceding ordinary weekdays and the arriving special day; by the “separation” of the *Havdalah* ceremony we express the intrinsic “sanctity” of the departing day as distinguished from the preceding days of labor which assume their own significance. The weekdays are called *hol*, namely ordinary (relative to *Shabbat* which is *kodesh*, extraordinary); they are certainly neither secular nor profane.

A Jew strives, as he must, to live a religiously dignified and “hallowed” life each and every day of the year, whether it is *Shabbat*, *Yom Kippur*, or a mundane weekday; for him no day is insignificant, un-Godly, or unholy. As we are ordained to rest on *Shabbat*, so are we expected to

labor during the rest of the week; “Six days you shall work and do all your tasks, but the Seventh day is *Shabbat*. . . .”³⁴ Both labor and rest ought to be elevated to the level of the sacred and significant.

The distinction between *kodesh* and *hol* — the core theme of *Havdalah* — reflects our human recognition and appreciation of the singularity and significance of the particular — the Seventh day, light, and Israel — but it does not admit a polarization between the select particular and its respective counterparts — the six days of work, darkness, or the nations. *Havdalah* points to uniqueness, but implies no antagonistic, conflicting extremes. Weekdays, too, are Divinely significant (“holy”), though differently from *Shabbat*; festivals, although less so than *Shabbat*, are still *kodesh*. When the conclusion of *Shabbat* coincides with the start of a festival, the blessing formula recited at the *Havdalah/Kiddush* of the occasion specifies a distinction “between *kodesh* and *kodesh*” — for the *kedushah* (so-called “sanctity”) of *Shabbat* is more profound than that of the festival.³⁵

The categories of *hol* and *kodesh* being relative, the middle days of a festival are called “*hol-hamo’ed*” (they are certainly not the “profane days of the festival”); these festive days, though *hol* (work on them being restricted less than on festival days, but more than on regular weekdays), are still special, consecrated.

We celebrate the Seventh day, which is a day of *kodesh*, as we abstain from work; we elevate the six days of *hol*, infusing them with *kodesh*, as we engage in work. As we depart from the sanctity of the Seventh day, we look forward towards the six days of work, “which approach us for our good” (*le-tovah*), and to our sacred duties and responsibilities during these weekdays. As *Shabbat* arrives, we welcome her with special joy, as we recite the *Kiddush*. As *Shabbat* leaves, we wish her farewell, as we somberly recite the *Havdalah*. Then we look forward for the advent of a new week.

To mark the preciousness of *Shabbat*, we add to its holiness by welcoming it earlier, *before* sunset, and parting from it later, *after* nightfall. As we part, we sing with hope and yearning the traditional hymns, *Eliyahu Ha-Navi* and *Shavu’a Tov* — praying for our people’s messianic redemption and wishing one another a “good” week. The weekdays, though *hol* (relative to the *Shabbat* and festivals) — are still projected and expected to be significant, meaningful — namely, “good.” As any sacred festival in Judaism is considered to be a *Yom Tov* — a “Good Day” — so we wish the mundane week following *Shabbat* to be a *Shavu’ah Tov* — a “Good Week” (and the mundane year following *Rosh Hashanah* to be a “*Shanah Tovah*” — a “Good Year”) — in light of the Torah’s first creation narrative, that on the conclusion of the Sixth day of work, even before the advent of the Seventh, God declared all His creation to be “*Tov Me’od*” — “Very Good!”

NOTES

1. Gen. 1:4, 6, 7, 14, 18.
2. Lev. 10:10, 11:47, 20:24, 25, 26.
3. Ezek. 22:26, 42:20.
4. B. *Pesahim* 104a.
5. Lev. 10:10.
6. Ex. 26:33; *Mishnah Kelim* 1:6.
7. Gen. 1:4.
8. Lev. 20:26.
9. Lev. 10:10, 11:47.
10. Gen. 1:7.
11. Deut. 10:8.
12. I Ch. 23:13.
13. Gen. 2:3.
14. B. *Berakhot* 33a.
15. Ibid.
16. J. *Berakhot* 5:2; cf., Rav Yosef, B. *Berakhot* 33a.
17. Psalms 116:13.
18. Isaiah 12:2-3; Psalms 3:9, 46:12, 84:123; 20:10; Esther 8:16 (this last verse is repeated by the audience).
19. R. Avraham ben Natan of Lunel (12th century), *Ha-manhig, Shabbat* #76. Perhaps it also refers to *yivneh*, may He [God] rebuild [Jerusalem]!
20. Psalms 116:13.
21. M. *Berakhot* 8:5.
22. Rashbam, B. *Pesahim* 102b, based on Rashi, B. *Bezah* 33b; *Tosafot*, *ad loc.*
23. *Sefer Zemanim, Hil. Shabbat* 29:24.
24. B. *Berakhot* 43b.
25. R. Moshe ben Nahman (13th c. Spain) in his *Novellae*, *ad loc.*
26. Ex. 35:3.
27. B. *Pesahim* 53b; J. *Berakhot* 8:5.
28. B. *Pesahim* 103b, Rashbam.
29. Ex. 20:8.
30. *Mekhilla*, *ad loc.*
31. *Sefer Ha-Mizvot, mizvat aseh* 155.
32. *Sefer Zemanim, Hil. Shabbat* 29:1.
33. My rendition of Maimonides — “you shall memorialize [the day] by observing it as a day of rest (*Shabbat*) and announcing its sanctity (*Kiddush*)” — deviates significantly from the common translations. The rendition in the Yale Judaica Series edition (New Haven, 1961), “Remember it by way of recital of praise and sanctification,” is based on the printed editions of Maimonides’ Code, which read *shevah* (praise) instead of *Shabbat* (the letter *taf* mistakenly read as *het*): “*zokhrehu zekhirat shevah ve-kiddush*” — thus introducing an extrinsic element to the precept of *Kiddush*, praise, which is certainly not indicated in the quoted verse. The correct version, based on earlier manuscripts (and recently published in the Kafah edition, Jerusalem, 1986), is “*zokhrehu zekhirat Shabbat ve-Kiddush*.” This phrase (reading *Shabbat* instead of *shevah*) makes sense, as it follows and interprets the previously quoted verse, which includes three crucial words, *zakhor, Shabbat* (not *shevah*) and *le-kaddesho*: “*zokhrehu zekhirat Shabbat ve-Kiddush*” — “*zekhirat Shabbat*” entails its commemoration as *Shabbat*, a day of rest, from “*zakhor et yom Ha-Shabbat*,” and “*ve-kiddush*” adds the rite of its verbal consecration, from “*le-kaddesho*.”
34. Ex. 20:9, 34:21.
35. M. *Hulin* 1:7.

An Analysis of the Book of Jonah

PAUL KAHN

THE BOOK OF JONAH IS UNIQUE IN BOTH form and content. It is one of the smallest books of the Prophets, and it conveys its message through the medium of a story. Rarely does it fail to captivate its reader, while at the same time it poses a variety of striking questions of theme and narrative. Indeed, to the thoughtful reader, the *Book of Jonah* is one of the most enigmatic writings of the Prophets. Jonah is a rebellious prophet. Why? In view of his rebelliousness, why does God continue to call upon him after his attempt to flee, and then reason with him about His forgiveness of a repentant population? The earlier, remarkable repentance of the ship's sailors is matched by an even more startling repentance by the people of Nineveh. Perhaps the most significant and perplexing matter, however, is Jonah's taking exception to God's forgiving the population of Nineveh, articulated in opposition to a central Jewish doctrine of Divine mercy.

I suggest that the seminal problem for the prophet Jonah is the threat of exile of the people of Israel. Specifically, Jonah's flight is in response to the specter of the potential destruction of the northern Kingdom of Israel at the hands of Nineveh/Ashur. The issue of exile raised immense theological issues for Jonah, involving the appropriateness of justice and mercy in God's world. We will attempt to trace the development of the sub-themes related to this formulation, thereby examining the many facets of the book's main theme.

The present investigation will attempt to demonstrate the value of a literary analysis of structure¹ in trying to solve the enigma presented by the *Book of Jonah*. Literary analysis assumes that communication in literature may take place through ideas as conveyed not only by words directly, but also by the use of symbols, the attribution or withholding of motives, the reprising of motifs and thematic key words, and subtle modification of near-verbatim repetition of phrases. This methodology, it will be recognized, is quite similar to accepted Rabbinic exegesis.² The Rabbinic method is frequently generated by philosophical or historical considerations, and this is especially so in the Rabbinic approach to Jonah, which is limited in its textual base. The present literary approach is more anchored in the text. Moreover, while Rabbinic exegesis may focus on a single phrase or symbol, the present approach is more reliant on a pattern of meanings, all pointing to the same interpretation.

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What is, therefore, essential is the pattern of symbols and images that are evoked and, additionally, their interplay with context and ideas more openly articulated.³ Patterns of language as well as images will, therefore, be explored to clarify ideas that are being communicated.

A second aspect of literary analysis is the technical “point of view” — that is, from whose standpoint and in whose voice is the story being told. The book is structured through the use of three main voices: the voice of God, that of Jonah, and that of the Narrator. Each will be identified, often to clarify a literary pattern being developed, or to note the emergence of symbolic patterns.

Yet a third aspect of literary analysis is required in interpreting Jonah: intertextuality. The present analysis assumes that it was written for an audience that was fully conversant with other Biblical texts⁴ and with an ear finely attuned to detecting similarities and differences in context and phraseology. More specifically, in identifying and interpreting symbols and significance of language, emphasis will be placed upon reference to the Five Books of Moses.

I

The *Book of Jonah* can be seen as structured along various lines. It is divided into four logical chapters: the first describes Jonah’s flight; the second relates his being inside the great fish and the resultant prayer; the third, his encounter with Nineveh and its consequences; and the fourth chapter relates the dialogue between God and Jonah after God’s forgiveness of Nineveh. The Masoretic structure, however, suggests a different organization, of two main cycles,⁵ with the possible delineation of an epilogue.⁶ The first cycle includes Jonah’s flight, his being swallowed by the big fish and his prayer (Chap. 1:1–2:10). This is followed by a pivotal single verse (2:11) reporting the vomiting of Jonah upon dry land.⁷ The second cycle (3:1 to the end)⁸ tells of Jonah’s prophecy to Nineveh and God’s forgiveness, followed by the dialogue between God and Jonah.

Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying: (1:1)⁹

The name Jonah ben Amittai is significant, having been noted in 2 Kings (14:25–26), where there is a description of Jonah’s involvement with the northern Kingdom of Israel, prophesying the King’s restoring the border of Israel. To the knowledgeable reader, an historical background to the *Book of Jonah* is thus established.

Jonah’s name is quite fortuitous, for, in addition to the historical reference, his Hebrew name, *Yonah*, would have elicited a number of images.¹⁰ First, the sounds of the word itself have a distinct softness to them. More significantly, *yonah*, in Hebrew, means *dove*. The main image of a dove for the Biblical mind is the dove of the Flood of Noah,

that signaled the end of the deluge and destruction, the beginning of rebirth and peace (Genesis 8:8–12). But the image of the soft dove stands in sharp contradistinction to the images elicited by the name “son of Amittai.” Amittai is a derivative of the word *emet*, meaning truth. Truth is a stark image, verging upon uncompromising justice or *din*.¹¹ Indeed, the tension between Yonah and Amittai articulates a basic conflict in the book, the conflict between love and justice.

An extension of the symbol of the dove can be noted here. In the sacrificial order of the Temple, a dove could substitute for a lamb (see Leviticus 12:8). The ram/lamb is a popular symbol of Israel, derived from the ram that was sacrificed in Isaac’s stead. The dove, therefore, represents Israel.¹² Thus, the name *Yonah* associates love specifically with the people of Israel, while, at the same time, it reminds us of the story of Noah and the destruction of the world, a manifestation of God’s justice. Jonah’s name thereby introduces the tension of Israel versus universal concern, of love versus justice, in the story to come.

“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim against it; for their wickedness is come up before Me.” But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord; and he went down to Jaffa, and found a ship going to Tarshish, from the presence of the Lord. But the Lord hurled a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty storm in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken (1:2–4).

Quoting God’s command, the second verse uses a number of phrases which will be repeated later, thereby establishing a semantic unity to the book. The formula “Nineveh, the great city,” is repeated numerous times, emphasizing the importance of the metropolis and its universal character. But not only is Nineveh a “great” city; the wind and the storm (1:4), God’s creations and punishing instruments, are equally “great.” Nineveh and nature are both great, both being creations of the Lord, reflective of His Power and Justice, and His Love. This is later reflected in the story of the gourd, created and then destroyed, evoking a parallel to Nineveh and its masses. Additionally, Jonah is not told what to say. The reason for this ambiguity will be discussed below, after further thematic development. In response to the command, “Arise . . . call,” the narrator, perhaps ironically, notes that Jonah does rise, but not to obey God; rather, “To flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord” (1:3).

And the sailors were afraid, and cried every man unto his god; . . . But Jonah went down into the innermost parts of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep (1:5).

In response to fear, every man prayed to his god. This suggests that the ship, containing its diverse group of sailors, microcosmically represents humanity. This is enhanced by the image of the ship upon the sea as reminiscent of the pre-creation spirit or wind of God moving over the surface of the waters (Genesis 1:2). The image is one of chaos

about to be changed by creation. It is likewise reminiscent of Noah and his ark upon the vast waters during the great flood. Again, the image is one of chaos as a prelude to a demonstration of Divine power, control and order in the world. The image of an entity above chaotic waters becomes a universal salvation symbol.¹³ Jonah's mission to Nineveh has been associated with saving universal man from danger.

The story of the ship moves quickly from introducing the motif of universal man to presaging Jonah's coming encounter with Nineveh. While the frightened sailors cried every man to his god, Jonah went down to the recesses of the ship. This heralds Jonah's later dissociation from the prayers of Nineveh's population. Moreover, this is the first instance of Jonah's proclivity for retreating into an enclosed space, later in a fish, and eventually reprised in his retreating from Nineveh into a booth (*succah*).

The introduction of the ship's captain further develops the Nineveh encounter. The captain of the ship says to Jonah, "...what meanest thou that thou sleepest? Arise, call upon thy God so that God will think of us, that we perish not" (1:6). It is interesting to hear the captain exhort a prophet. By reporting the actual words of the captain, "Arise, call," the Narrator alerts us to the very same words in Hebrew used by God in His initial command to Jonah to "arise ... proclaim." The Narrator indulges once more in a favorite device — the ironic/verbal echo. The captain, too, commands Jonah to act like a prophet. Taking the metaphor of the sailors representing all humanity and the ship representing the world, the captain of the ship, in a sense, represents God Himself. There is, however, a dual quality to this representation. While the Hebrew words used for "captain," *rav ha' hovel*, may be captain or shipmaster, the literal meaning is far more ominous, namely, "master of injury." The Narrator thereby identifies God as the God of punishment, as indeed He is in terms of the threatening storm that He has hurled against the ship (1:4). However, the captain wants Jonah to pray for the innocent sailors, just as God wants Jonah to be compassionate for the innocent of Nineveh. He even uses the same language as the King of Nineveh will later use: "...so that we perish not" (3:9). The ship's captain thereby represents the attribute of justice, demanding that Jonah be a messenger of mercy and love. But Jonah's response is, "Throw me overboard," like his later request for death (4:3,8,9) rather than accepting Nineveh's redemption. The eventual contention between God and Jonah regarding Nineveh has been introduced on a thematic level.

The developing story begins to present Jonah's position in his conflict with God. The ship is in danger, and the sailors throw lots to identify the cause of their impending destruction. They then ask Jonah to identify himself fully. Jonah's response is instructive: "And he said to them, I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven,

Who hath made the sea and the dry land" (1:9). But this assertion of a central tenet of Judaism — here as later in Nineveh (4:2) — stands in *apparent* contradiction to his attempt to escape the command of the God Whom he fears (1:3), the Almighty, Who is inescapable. We must conclude, then, that Jonah's flight was not from God's authority, but from His presence, that is to say, His compassionate providence.

Jonah's concern for the Hebrew people is developed as a challenge to God's universal perspective. Jonah's response, "I am a Hebrew (*Ivri*)," associates¹⁴ with Abraham (the archetypal Jew) (Genesis 14:13), and with Joseph, who is referred to as a Hebrew three times in Genesis (39:14,17;41:12; in related fashion 40:15). Additionally, the name "Hebrew" is used seven times in Exodus (2:6,11,13; 3:18, 5:3, 7:16, 9:1) in reference to Israel under Egyptian slavery. All of these allusions are to Israel caught in a Gentile world of war,¹⁵ imprisonment and tyranny.

II

After Jonah is thrown overboard, a great fish appointed by God swallows him. For a second time, Jonah finds himself in a hidden, enclosed space. The midrash describes Jonah's entering the fish's mouth as one entering a great synagogue.¹⁶ "I called out unto the Lord . . . and He answered me . . ." (2:3) cries Jonah. This suggests that Jonah perceives a more positive image than one would have expected in this strange dungeon.¹⁷ It becomes a kind of holy enclave in the midst of terror. In the middle of his prayer, he says: ". . .yet I will look again toward Thy holy Temple" (2:5), and again, ". . .and my prayer came in unto Thee, into Thy holy Temple" (2:8). While Radak and Ibn Ezra interpret the phrase, "holy Temple," to refer to the heavens, to this writer the term more likely refers literally to the Temple in Jerusalem, as the *Targum* and the Midrash postulate.¹⁸ Jonah's focus upon the holy Temple, and the possible significance of enclosed spaces as holy enclaves, suggest an interpretation of spatial "support" as significant and necessary. This interpretation will be developed further.

The next verse, in a sense, is the fulcrum of the *Book of Jonah* itself. It is short, deceptively simple, yet, upon analysis, complex and explosive. As previously mentioned, in the Masoretic Text this verse occupies a central and separate section. It summarizes the developing themes of the Book — Jonah versus God; justice versus mercy; universality versus the particularity of the Jewish people; inevitability of history versus the possibility of avoiding it — and looks forward to the Narrator's resolution of these confrontations. The text reads, "And the Lord spoke unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land" (2:11). The word "vomited" (*vayakei*) is surprising and intense. It is found in only one other context in the Bible — referring to the expulsion from the Land of Israel, especially of a sinful Israelite people

(Leviticus 18:25,28;20:22). It is the term that introduces the consequences of exile to the Jewish people.¹⁹ With this pivotal sentence, the Narrator solidifies Jonah's misgivings about saving the great city of Nineveh, and confronts us with the future of the Jew in a non-Jewish world — exile. With self-sacrifice, Jonah has attempted to evade God's mission to Nineveh so that Nineveh will not repent, but will be destroyed, so that the Kingdom of Israel will not be destroyed eventually by the forces of Ashur/Nineveh. But Jonah the dove/ram/lamb, the defender and representative of Israel, has been vomited out from his enclosed, holy place. Does this suggest that its very enclosedness and over-inclusiveness has undermined its holiness? Moreover, is this symbol telling us that the destruction of the Land of Israel and the ensuing exile has already been ordained? Is this the truth (*Amittai*) that Jonah has been evading, that he finds so frightening?

III

The word of God now comes to Jonah a second time. As at the time of the first command, the same formula is used. "Arise, go unto Nineveh the great city and *call* unto it the *call* that I say to thee" (3:2, my emphasis). Again, the "arise . . . call" formula is used, perhaps to show that God's intentions have not changed, and to communicate to Jonah that God is Master. Again, the content of the message is not divulged. Jonah goes to Nineveh, but it is no longer simply the "great city", it is now *gedolah lelohim* (3:3). While the meaning might well be "exceedingly great city," literally it reads, "a great city unto God." Perhaps this is to suggest that Nineveh, indeed the entire world, is God's creation.

In fulfillment of God's command, Jonah *called* and said, "Another forty days, and Nineveh shall be overturned" (3:4). These are perhaps the strangest five words (in Hebrew) ever proclaimed by a prophet. They certainly had a most dramatic effect upon the masses of Nineveh and, the Narrator probably hoped, on his readers as well. Biblical echoes abound. "Forty days" reminds us of the flood in the time of Noah (Genesis 7:12), when a whole generation refused to repent and suffered total destruction. God's decision to destroy the world with the flood is introduced with the statement, "And the earth was filled with *violence* . . . for all flesh had corrupted their *way* upon the earth" (Genesis 6:11—12, my emphasis), precisely the terms used by the King of Nineveh: "Let every one turn from his evil *way*, and from the *violence* that is in their hands" (3:8, my emphasis).²⁰ As for the word *nehepakhet*, "overturned," it is strongly associated with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.²¹ "And He overturned those cities . . ." (Genesis 19:25) — cities like Nineveh literally called, "the cities of God." A similar phrase to the term *nehepakhet* is used a few times in reference to the destruction

of Egypt (Exodus 7:15,17,20; 10:19 and perhaps 14:5), another great nation, again like Nineveh, that was warned, and suffered the consequences of not heeding. An intriguing association of linguistically-rooted terms is to be found in the Bible's description of Adam's, i.e., universal man's expulsion from the Garden of Eden:²² "So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the Garden of Eden the cherubim, and the flaming sword which turned every way (*hamit-hapekhet*), to guard the way to the tree of life" (Genesis 3:24). This connects the story of man's sin and expulsion from Eden with the problem of Nineveh. Nineveh's guilt and possible destruction are associated with original, universal man and his tragic failure.

Nineveh's response to Jonah's call is dramatic; the people of Nineveh *proclaimed/called* a fast (3:5) and the king commanded them to *call* to God (3:8). What Jonah had failed to do in response to God's initial command and to the *call* of the ship's captain, the people of Nineveh now did in response to the prophet and in response to their king. Indeed, an ironic comparison is being made between Jonah, the representative of an apparently righteous Israel, and the King of Nineveh, the symbol of the sinful world, to the detriment of Jonah.

The climax of the book presents God's forgiveness of Nineveh and Jonah's explosive reaction. "And God relented of the evil which He said He would do unto them; and He did not do it" (3:10). God invokes the same formula of forgiveness as applied to Israel after the sin of the Golden Calf: "And the Lord relented of the evil which He said He would do *to His people*" (Exodus 32:14 my emphasis).²³ God's position is clear: the same forgiveness is applicable to both Jew and non-Jew alike. Significantly, it is after this statement of God's forgiveness that the Narrator notes, "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry" (4:1). Jonah's objection to God's forgiveness can be tentatively formulated as follows: In relation to the Golden Calf, the forgiveness was "to His people;" as to Nineveh, it was "to them." Regarding the Golden Calf, forgiveness was given within the context of a second set of tablets (Exodus 34:1) signifying an affirmation of the covenant; as to Nineveh, no holding structure existed. To Jonah, this was a tremendous error. Jonah is astonished by the fact that the language used by God to forgive the Jews at the time of the Golden Calf is now applied to forgive an alien people — indeed, a people who will presently destroy the Kingdom of Israel.

The next few verses repeat the word "evil" five times, but with change of nuance and meaning.²⁴ In a book examining justice, mercy, and human culpability, it is not surprising that we are treated to a discourse on evil. The king commands the people of Nineveh to repent, to "turn every one from his *evil* way" (3:8, my emphasis). The Narrator tells us, "God saw" that they repented "from their *evil* way; and God relented of the *evil* which He said He would do unto them" (3:10, em-

phasis mine). Now Jonah speaks. He describes God as “relenting of *evil*” (4:2). This comes, however, after the Narrator uses the identical word “evil” to describe Jonah’s feeling when God forgave the people of Nineveh: “But it displeased Jonah greatly” is translated more literally as “And Jonah perceived it as *evil*, a great *evil*.” Jonah appears to judge God’s action as a great evil. It appears that evil is, in fact, multifaceted, depending upon one’s perspective.²⁵ In addition to the difference between the human and Divine view of evil as explored in Job, we are introduced to a difference between a Jewish and universal perspective of evil.

Jonah’s words are described as a prayer, but the content and purpose are quite different from his previous prayer from the belly of the fish. With shocking intensity and barely contained exasperation, if not actual anger, Jonah “explains” himself. He begins his prayer with the formula, “I pray Thee, O Lord” (4:2), the same ritualistic phrase that was (surprisingly) used by the non-Jewish sailors of the ship (1:14) and similar to the prayer of Moses to save Israel after the sin of the Golden Calf (Exodus 32:31). Jonah proceeds, “Was this not my saying, when I was yet in my own country? Therefore I fled beforehand unto Tarshish” (4:2). Jonah is going to clarify the great puzzle: he will explain his thinking and motivation in fleeing from the Lord: “. . . for I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, long-suffering, and great in love, and relents of the evil” (4:2). This declaration of Jonah is obviously a rephrasing of God’s attributes of mercy as given in Exodus (34:6–7), the “Thirteen Attributes” associated with God’s forgiveness of Israel after the sin of the Golden Calf. Jonah ends his prayer with the plea, “Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech Thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live” (4:3), like when he was on the ship. But do we now know why Jonah fled? To what does he object? Jonah appears to obscure as much as he reveals!²⁶

It has been suggested that Jonah’s objection denies the appropriateness of mercy and forgiveness in this world,²⁷ or, at best, denies their applicability to the non-Jewish world.²⁸ Neither interpretation, however, is tenable. Does he deny the validity of God’s attributes of mercy and compassion? Obviously not.²⁹ The graciousness and mercy of God are among the most wonderful and beautiful of Judaism’s teachings. Jonah himself seems to say it with love and affection. Moreover, the institution of the Temple worship, at least in part, is founded upon the possibility of God’s mercy and forgiveness. Jonah himself has stated his commitment to the Temple (2:5,8). A prophet of Israel would not deny such a central tenet of Judaism, which Jonah himself attests to when he says, “For I knew that. . .” (4:2).³⁰

To suggest that Jonah denied the applicability of mercy to non-Jews as a general category suggests a rebellion against a universal historical principle of Judaism. Abraham’s prayer for Sodom indicates his concern

for non-Jews.³¹ Solomon's dedication of the Temple specifies (2 Kings 8:41–43) that His House is a House for all people. Jonah himself volunteers to be thrown overboard so that the ship's sailors (originally, at least, non-Jews) may live (1:12), suggesting internal evidence of the prophet's universal concern.

IV

While Jonah's words appear to obscure his thinking and motivation, a review of patterns of images shows that the Narrator has been quite effective in conveying the issues of contention between God and His prophet. One such pattern is the following: the destructive flood of Noah, the destruction of Sodom, and the punishment of Egypt. They all depict situations of monumental evil, involving universal man deserving punishment, and, eventually, being punished or destroyed. With a background of concern for the threatened future of the northern Kingdom of Israel at the hands of the very kingdom that he is sent to save, Jonah formulates a theological position differentiating between error on the one hand and vicious brutality on the other. The potential of such evil to cause immense suffering to others must be considered. Mercy and forgiveness must have limitations, and Jonah argues that brutality should not be forgiven.

A different pattern of images communicates a further development of Jonah's argument for limiting the universal application of mercy. Jonah has sought protection and found solace in enclosed places. He will continue to seek protective shelter under the booth that he will later build upon leaving Nineveh. This pattern of symbols signifies the holiness of God that is "contained" in the Temple as well as the uniqueness of the Jewish people versus universal man. Moreover, it indicates that, in order for good to triumph and for evil to be contained, there must be a holding frame, a structuring quality that supports man. Man can repent, but if there is no set of mores or values that protect him from the temptation to backslide, like an enclosed space to which he may go, the choice for good is temporary. This is Jonah's position: The Sinaitic Covenant provides Israel with a holding quality — an enclosed space for the Jewish people, then and forever, ensuring their repentance. For non-Jews, a degree of righteousness, of ethical and moral sensitivity, provides a protective frame. Violence, tyranny and brutality destroy the frame. The repentance of Nineveh is quick but temporary, that of Jews is long lasting. To forgive brutal and dangerous Nineveh for a short lived repentance that would bring about the destruction of Israel is untenable to Jonah, and would constitute the corruption of mercy and justice. For Jonah, life is no longer bearable.

Returning to the text, Jonah's attack can now be understood more fully. From the beginning, Jonah had been fearful that God would apply

the same thirteen attributes of mercy and graciousness to Nineveh that He had applied to Israel. “Therefore I fled beforehand unto Tarshish” (4:2). We can understand Jonah as explaining his flight on another level as well, one of symbolic communication. He fled from “before God” (1:3, literal translation), a phrase used twice and thereby emphasized by the Narrator. Jonah never doubted the authority or power of the God Whom he feared, “The God of heaven, Who hath made the sea and the dry land” (1:9). But, Jonah implied, God must admit that there is a lack of sanctity outside the Land of Israel, since it is not “before God.” That is why there can be no prophecy there.³² If that be the case, there arises the unspoken question in his mind, “How can You consider forgiving and saving Nineveh, through a prophet?” For Jonah, there is neither righteousness nor holiness to hold and guide them.

Jonah’s articulation of the thirteen principles of mercy clarifies previously noted problems with the term “call:” 1) Why is the term “call” repeated, especially in God’s commands to Jonah (1:2, 3:2)? Why is there continual vagueness in the content of the call? Does the very vagueness of the charge suggest that there might be another hidden call involved? To an audience attuned to Biblical idiom, the best known use of the term “call” is to be found precisely in the thirteen attributes of God to which Jonah referred. “And the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and he *called* the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and *called*, ‘The Lord, The Lord, God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth’ ” (Exodus 34:5–6, my emphasis). This is the possible hidden “call.” God commands Jonah to call to Nineveh, but the call is ambiguous and will depend upon man’s interpretation, upon Nineveh’s response. If they remain evil, the call will be one of destruction, “And he (Jonah) *called* and said, ‘Another forty days and Nineveh shall be overturned’ ” (3:4 emphasis mine). But if they repent, the call shall be the call of forgiveness, “The Lord, The Lord, mighty, merciful and gracious...” Interestingly, the Talmud (B. *Sanhedrin* 89b) develops a similar idea but focuses upon the ambiguity of the phrase “Nineveh shall be overturned.” The Talmud relates that, originally, Jonah was told that the city would be *nehepakhet* — a Hebrew word which can mean either “transformed” or “overturned,” i.e., destroyed.³³ The *Book of Jonah* demonstrates that God’s call to mankind is frequently ambiguous, and its ultimate interpretation is dependent upon man’s moral and ethical response to the call.³⁴

The ensuing “dialogue,” until the end of the book (4:3–11), appears to constitute an epilogue.³⁵ Jonah’s mission has been completed. Nineveh has repented and been forgiven, and Jonah has explained his position. What is there left to do?³⁶ The answer lies in the necessity of elaborating God’s response to Jonah’s attack. The existence of the ep-

ilogue demonstrates that it is the philosophical controversy between God and Jonah regarding the universal application of mercy that is the central theme of the book.

And the Lord said: "Thou hadst had pity on the gourd, for which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow, which came up in a night, and perished in a night; and should not I have pity on Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also many animals?" (4:10–11)

Traditionally, the *Book of Jonah* has been read on *Yom Kippur*, the "Day of Atonement." The relationship between the two can now be seen as relating to a set of similar issues: destruction and salvation on the one hand, and particularism and universalism on the other. Like the *Book of Jonah* with the call to Nineveh, the theme of *Yom Kippur* is one of threatened destruction and a call for repentance and forgiveness. In retrospect, the Day of Atonement theme had been evoked by the lots cast by the sailors of the ship (1:7), leading to Jonah being thrown overboard. This is reminiscent of the lots used by the High Priest in the Temple service of *Yom Kippur* to choose between the scapegoat to save the Jewish people destined for the "wilderness" (destruction), and the goat designated for sacrificial service in the Temple (Leviticus 16:8–10).³⁷ In addition, the image elicited by the phrase "forty days" (3:4) need no longer be limited to destruction (Noah's flood). Indeed, Moses' ascent to Mount Sinai to commune with God for three periods of forty days is also brought to mind. This suggests a complex image of threatened destruction after the tragedy of the Golden Calf (Deuteronomy 9:9–16) and then forgiveness associated with Moses' third ascent to Sinai (Exodus 34:28).³⁸

Particularism and universalism relate to the Day of Atonement as well as to the entire High Holiday period including *Succot*. *Rosh Hashanah*, the Jewish New Year, is universalistic in its commemoration of the creation of the world and the challenge to humanity generated by this awareness. The Day of Atonement, on the other hand, begins with a marked shift to the Jewish people. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik suggested³⁹ that it was in order to return the congregation's experience to universalistic concerns that the *Book of Jonah* was introduced into *Yom Kippur's* afternoon service. This focus continues throughout the holiday of *Succot*, demonstrated by the seventy sacrifices brought during this festival as a symbol of concern for the "seventy nations of the world" (B. *Succah* 55b). The *Book of Jonah* not only expresses the *Yom Kippur* call for repentance, but reveals the High Holiday themes of responsibility, Divine forgiveness, and the vision of universal compassion.

This literary, symbolic, and conceptual analysis, with emphasis on the patterning of images, analyzed in *Jonah* and extended by intertextuality, has provided a many-faceted but ultimately unified theme

to the book. The analysis of the pivotal verse of Jonah being vomited out upon dry land has reinforced the significance of Israel's threatened exile, and has supplied us with the motivation of Jonah for his flight from "before God." For Jonah, however, the issue of the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel and the ensuing exile has raised the much broader issue of the appropriate applications of justice, mercy and forgiveness in this world. Jonah has argued that a culture of brutality, coupled with a lack of parameters of societal ethics and morality, does not provide for satisfactory repentance. Therein, argues Jonah, lies a significant difference between universal man and Israel, for whom the Sinaitic covenant provides such a frame. God does not repel Jonah as His prophet but, rather, sustains His charge to him, thereby demonstrating a tolerance of Jonah's position. But God counters Jonah's argument by demonstrating the universal human potential for good, and by defending the universal application of mercy and forgiveness.

NOTES

1. For Biblical studies using literary analysis, see: R. Alter and F. Kermode (eds.), *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987) and R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981). For a literary analysis of Jonah, see J. Magonet, *Form and Meaning: Studies in Literary Techniques in the Book of Jonah* (Frankfort, 1967). Also see G.H. Cohen, *Gisha Historit VeGisha Al-Historit Lamikra in Hagot Hamikra* (Jerusalem: Dept. Education & Culture, 1977) pp. 79–89.

2. For a discussion of the relationship between midrash and literary analysis, see A. Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983), pp. 17–18; R. Alter, *Biblical Narrative*, p. 11; and K.P. Bland, *The Rabbinic Method and Literary Criticism* in K.R.R. Louis Gross, J.S. Ackerman, and T.S. Warshaw (eds.), *Literary Interpretation of Biblical Narratives* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), p. 16.

3. See C. Brooks and R.P. Warren, *Understanding Poetry*, 3rd ed. (New York: Rinehart & Winston, 1966), p. 56; C. Brooks, J.T. Purser, and R.P. Warren, *An Approach to Literature*, 4th ed. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1964), p. 281; and Magonet, *Form and Meaning*, pp. 67 and 81.

4. Magonet, *Form and Meaning*, p. 68.

5. So according to the *Koren Bible* (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 1966).

6. So according to the Leningrad Codex, *Pentateuch, Prophets and Hagiographa*, Codex Leningrad B19^A (Jerusalem: Makor Publishing).

7. The delineation of the epilogue (4:4 to end) as a separate section according to the Leningrad Codex (note 6) does not detract from the pivotal nature of verse 2:11.

8. So according to the *Koren Bible* (note 5). According to the Leningrad Codex (note 6), until 4:3.

9. Translations are from the Jewish Publication Society edition of the Bible, 1st ed. (except where I have offered my own translation to highlight the original Hebrew).

10. See *Midrash Ruth*, 2:5. Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Ychoshuah ben Korha would interpret names.

11. Abarbanel also takes the name as symbolic, but suggests that the name describes Jonah's words as always being truthful. All citations of Abarbanel are from the Tel Aviv: Elisha Ltd., 1950 reissue of the Pizzaro, Amsterdam publication, pp. 124–130. Also see Ackerman in Alter and Kermode, *Literary Guide*, p. 234, and T.S. Warshaw, "The Book of Jonah," in Louis Gross, etc., *Literary Interpretation*, p. 196.

12. For a midrashic association of the dove with Israel, see *Midrash Tanhuma*, *Tezaveh* 5.

13. A more distant image is that of the infant Moses being put in a box and placed in the water (Exodus 2:3). This, too, may be a potential salvation image.

14. Abarbanel (*ad loc.*) suggests that, in addition to identifying himself, Jonah is admitting that he is a sinner (*avaryan*).

15. Abraham is called a "Hebrew" (Genesis 14:13) when being informed of the war involving the four kings and the resultant capture of his nephew, Lot. Interesting is Rashi's comment (*ad loc.*) that the word *Ivri* alludes to Abraham's coming from the "other side of the river," thereby emphasizing the opposition between Jew and non-Jew.

16. *Yalkut Shimoni*, 2, *Remez* 550.

17. In order to explain Jonah's ability to remain alive in the belly of the fish, Abarbanel and *Malbim* (New York: Torat Israel Publ., 1941), Vol. 9, pp. 66–71, evoke the parallel of a fetus in the womb of its mother. Such an image may be interpreted not as a psychoanalytic symbol, but, rather, a statement of closeness and protection in relation to one's Creator. This idea will be developed further.

18. *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Op. cit.*; *Pirkei de R. Eliezer*, Chap 10.

19. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik in lecture on 5-22-79 at Yeshiva University, Rebbetzin Tanya Soloveitchik and Shmuel Soloveitchik *Yahrzeit* lecture, recorded on audio cassette: *Relationship Between Sidras and Haftoras — Sefer Vayikra* (M. Nordlicht series, nos. 5019 & 5020), no. 5019, side A.

20. Abarbanel.

21. So Ibn Ezra and Radak (*ad loc.*). All citations of Ibn Ezra, Radak, and Rashi on the text are from *Mikra'ot Gedolot* (New York: Tanakh/Shulsinger, 1935), pp. 1206–36.

22. It is suggested that we consider the possibility of multiple images as well as multiple levels of images. Furthermore, a pattern of images appearing on the same level may have specific significance.

23. L. Frankel, "Verahamav Al Kol Ma'asav" in H. Hamiel (ed.), *Ma'asef Le'inyanai Hinukh Vehora'ah* (9) (Jerusalem: Zionist Org., 1968), p. 199.

24. Magonet, *Form and Meaning*, pp. 22–25.

25. Also see H. Hamiel, *Sefer Yonah*, pp. 39–40.

26. For discussion of these issues, see Y. Bachrach, *Yonah ben Amittai VeEliyahu*, (Jerusalem: Zionist Org., 1959), p. 42; Magonet, *Form and Meaning*, p. 8; and Frankel, "Verahamav Al Kol Ma'asav," p. 200.

27. J.S. Ackerman in Alter and Kermode, *Literary Guide*, p. 240. See also T.S. Warshaw, "The Book of Ruth" in Louis Gross, etc., *Literary Interpretations*, p. 191.

28. B.B. Trawick, *The Bible as Literature* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1963, 2nd ed. 1970), p. 305; Magonet, *Form and Meaning*, p. 105.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 199–200.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 196–197.

31. Abarbanel, third question at end of Chap. 2.

32. *Mekhillta*, *Bo*.

33. For elaboration on the ambiguity of the terminology, see Rashi on the Talmud (*ad loc.*) and on the verse in Jonah (3:4). Also see H. Hamiel, *Sefer Yonah*, p. 133.

34. Rav Nahman bar Yizhak (B. *Yebamot* 98a) extends the meaning of the verse "Nineveh shall be overturned" and its prophetic intent much further. According to him, the prophetic call and its results (the transformation from evil to good) were not limited to Nineveh, but applied to the northern kingdom of Israel as well, thereby explaining Jonah's role in the enigmatic verses of 2 Kings (14:25–26). The call for repentance, and the ambiguous results dependent upon man's actions, may thereby be seen as universal, unlimited prophecy. That it is eventually applied to the northern kingdom of Israel is startling, and may be the ultimate irony of Jonah's struggle. An analysis, however, of

the relationship between Rav Nahman bar Yizhak's opinion and our interpretive approach is beyond the scope of this paper.

35. According to the Leningrad Codex, the epilogue is delineated as a separate section. See note 6.

36. Bachrach, *Yonah VeEliyahu*, p. 42.

37. This theme was brought to my attention by my son, Rabbi Ari Kahn. Interestingly, *The Tikunei Hazohar* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1978), p. 57b, associates *Yom Kippurim* to *Purim*, the day when lots were cast for the destruction of the Jews.

38. Interestingly, the third ascent culminates with the return of Moses to the people on *Yom Kippur*. See Rashi on Exodus 34:29.

39. In lecture. Recorded in A.R. Besdin, *Man of Faith in the Modern World — Reflections of the Rav*, Vol. 2 (Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav, 1989), Chap. 15, pp. 141–147. Specifically, see p. 146.

Lilith

SARAH SINGER

(According to Jewish myth and legend, Lilith, Adam's first wife, would not submit to his domination. She took on the characteristics of a demon, developed wings, and flew about vowing vengeance for the treatment she had received at Adam's hands.)

I come between them, ride upon the wind
 To roil the climate of their waking air,
 Would mar the furrow, blight the tamarind,
 And, disembodied, hover when and where
 They take their ease. I, Lilith, spurned anew
 Each time he seeks her mouth, will soon demean
 Their days with guile, and hour on hour, imbue
 Belief with doubt though all is yet serene.
 See how they bask, the garden deemed their own.
 Eve plaits her hair, and Adam shucks the corn
 In that perpetual summer time has known
 Since the beginning when the light was born;
 But Eve regards the apple as I greet
 My friend, the serpent, coiled around her feet.

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A Mind to Savage Judaism

A Review-Essay by **EDWARD L. GREENSTEIN**

The Savage in Judaism: An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Ancient Judaism. By HOWARD EILBERG-SCHWARTZ. Bloomington and Indianapolis. Indiana University Press, 1990. xii + 290 pp.

THE TORAH HAS SOMETHING TO SAY ABOUT most areas of human life, even the act of relieving oneself. Deuteronomy 25, verses 13-14, enjoin the Israelites to defecate outside the camp, mincing no words in telling the Israelite to dig a hole, sit over it, and bury the excrement there. The explicit reason for the rule is expressed in the next verse: "For the Lord your God walks to and fro in the midst of your camp . . . so your camp must be holy." Holiness is meant to permeate everything Israel does.

But while the Bible and later the Talmud treat the most mundane habits of Israelite and subsequent Jewish culture, scholarly writing about the holy texts tends to shrink from the oozing of blood and other topics to be avoided at the table. The Biblicist Hans Walter Wolff's *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (1974), for example, avoids discussing various body functions, and deals with circumcision only in its figurative usage, when it is applied to the heart.

Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, a scholar of ancient Judaism teaching at Stanford University, in his ambitious and daring book, *The Savage in Judaism*, rushes in where the decorous fear to tread. Using the tools of a contemporary anthropologist, he reaches back in time and across cultures to expose what he suggests are the concepts and motives that underlie the laws and customs of the ancient Israelites and Jews in a number of areas: social and human-animal relations; circumcision; menstruation and other bodily discharges; ritual pollution; and the classification of the holy. After proposing the significance of the diverse norms in the Bible, Eilberg-Schwartz traces their development or interpretation in classical Judaism and, to some extent, in early Christianity. Throughout his analysis a two-pronged agenda is clear: to break down the dichotomy between Judaism (and Christianity) and the so-called "savage" — pagan — religions, and to confront the deeper meanings of the Jewish regulations concerning the so-called "lower" realms of behavior.

Exemplifying an admirable courage to traverse a variety of disciplines, Eilberg-Schwartz divides his project into two equally demanding parts. In the first, he endeavors to explain scholars' resistance to viewing

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Judaism alongside other earthy civilizations. He accomplishes this by means of a fascinating historical survey of attitudes, since the Renaissance, on the similarities between Judaism and the conventionally “primitive” cultures. Eilberg-Schwartz embraces the perspective of modern cultural anthropology, as it is reflected in the work of such exponents as Claude Lévi-Strauss, Victor Turner, Mary Douglas, and Clifford Geertz,¹ and presupposes that every society embodies, in its outward practices, deep-seated, complex ideas and values.

Eilberg-Schwartz strides proudly in the footsteps of such path-breakers; the title of his book pays homage to *The Savage Mind* by Lévi-Strauss. However, rather than forge his way through an Amazon jungle, as Lévi-Strauss did, Eilberg-Schwartz scrutinizes the literary expressions of ancient Israelites and Jews in order to uncover their ways of mapping reality. Before performing this analysis, however, he must answer a question that may be troubling the reader at this point. Lévi-Strauss and other cultural anthropologists have studied, in the main, illiterate, exotic societies by observing them first-hand. How can an anthropologist examine ancient Israel, or any culture that is remote in time as well as place?

Scholars have taken essentially three tacks. One is to use the interpretive principles that have been found successful in dealing with contemporary societies to analyze the remains, primarily literary remains, of an ancient culture.² The problem with this approach, as Lévi-Strauss himself admitted, is that the results of literary interpretation are supposed to be controlled by direct observation of social practices, by an ethnography.³ To offset this difficulty, some have taken a second tack, and compared the culture of modern Bedouin, whose lives in the areas of marriage and family seem to differ little from those that prevailed in the earlier Middle East.⁴

A third approach is the comparative, elucidating a culture by comparing and contrasting it with others. In Biblical studies, there is a long academic tradition of juxtaposing ancient Israel with the surrounding civilizations of the ancient Near East. Eilberg-Schwartz dismisses such comparisons, it would seem, because the ones that he has read⁵ tend to argue the position that Biblical Israel represents an evolutionary advance.⁶ He admits to a predilection to find not what sets cultures apart but what makes them share in a common humanity: “I was much more intrigued by how Israelites and ancient Jews were like other peoples than by how they were different” (p. 91).

Some scholars of the ancient Near East⁷ have, in fact, underscored similarities in thought between ancient Israel and its neighbors. Eilberg-Schwartz, however, is not convinced that cross-cultural comparisons necessarily benefit from any constraints on time and place. Humans are human, and “humans in different times and places struggle with similar sorts of issues” and may well “solve similar problems in analogous ways” (p. 101). Accordingly, one can gain insight into the underlying meaning

of ancient Jewish laws by juxtaposing them with so-called “savage” cultures around the world. Either all cultures are “savage,” or they are not “savage.”

Thus, Eilberg-Schwartz favors a different scholarly tradition of comparison, that of William Robertson Smith and James G. Frazer, who, a century ago interpreted ancient Israelite ritual and law in light of both local Middle Eastern and much farther-flung customs.⁸ At the very least, an investigation of how peoples around the world have related ritually to such matters as fertility, illness, and death, should produce hypotheses that might be tested on the Biblical and rabbinic literary evidence.

That, by and large, is what Eilberg-Schwartz does in the second part of his book. He examines relevant texts within an interpretive framework provided by the anthropological analysis of other cultures. The results are always intriguing. He emphasizes that by explaining a phenomenon in one way, he does not mean to rule out other simultaneous interpretations. Cultural norms, like sacred texts, may condense several senses in few symbols.

First, Eilberg-Schwartz draws significance from the fact that the Israelites frequently compare themselves, and other people, to plants and especially animals. For Biblical Israel, animal relations serve as analogues for human relations, and vice versa. Thus, to take one instance from a rich array of examples, “the rule against boiling a kid-goat [in its mother’s milk] parallels the prohibition against a male child having intercourse with his mother” (p. 129). Moving in the next chapter into the domain of agriculture, Eilberg-Schwartz buttresses his argument that, in the priestly literature of the Torah, circumcision is understood to enhance a boy’s future fertility, by pointing to a strong parallel between Israelites and plants. Leviticus 19:23-25 prescribes that fruit trees have their “foreskins” pruned — circumcised — in the fourth year, making their fruit edible only in the fifth.

From what he views as the covenant-building blood of circumcision,⁹ Eilberg-Schwartz turns next to the blood, and other body fluids, that defile. Rather than stress life-death symbolism, as others have done,¹⁰ Eilberg-Schwartz finds the key factor defining body fluids in the principle of control. The Israelite priests, for whom discipline is paramount, determine that the flows that cannot be constrained, like menstruation or a nocturnal emission, produce ritual pollution. Yet, because the typically male blood of circumcision is let under ritual control while the female blood of menstruation transcends a woman’s intentions, the message is conveyed, Eilberg-Schwartz maintains, that “males are . . . orderly, females disorderly . . .” (p. 188.).

Now, since, in the priestly tradition of the Torah, defilement issues from what cannot be controlled, ritual impurity is an ascribed, not an achieved, status, like the priestly lineage itself. In his next chapter, Eilberg-Schwartz suggests that the increasing importance of individual

achievement and intention in the Greco-Roman world leads to transformations of the Biblical purity system in rabbinic Judaism, the Qumran community, and early Christianity. The relatively closed community of Qumran continues to value certain forms of status; the Mishnah, which provides for conversion to Judaism, moves away from the notion of inherent impurity by considering "how an individual uses or conceives of a given object" (p. 212); and Paul, who erases the ethnic boundaries of Judaism, conditions contamination in "a person's actions or conscience" (p. 205).

In his last chapter, Eilberg-Schwartz delineates the nature of the metamorphosis by which the priestly metaphor in Biblical thought is reapplied in rabbinic Judaism. One's teacher becomes the father who counts. "The rabbis, in other words, created a form of reproduction that could dispense with the flesh" (p. 232) and, at the same time, marginalize women. The priestly genealogy is replaced by the chain of the Torah tradition. Judaism conserves the old metaphors, filling them with new meaning.

It is worth reiterating that since Eilberg-Schwartz has no natives to observe, his project is, first and foremost, one of textual interpretation. "The only controls over the flight of imagination," he writes in his conclusion, tellingly titled "Savaging Judaism," "are sensitive readings of ancient texts, attention to archaeological evidence, and a familiarity with religious cultures in other times and places" (p. 238). The conviction of Eilberg-Schwartz's interpretations will rest on the extent to which one will accept the Lévi-Straussian premise that heterogeneous cultures reflect a fundamentally homogeneous mind, and the degree to which his interpretations accommodate the texts. How "sensitive" are his "readings," and how "attentive" is he "to archaeological evidence?" Indeed, how "familiar" is he "with [other] religious cultures?"

Leaving the first question for last, we may consider briefly the latter two. It has already been said that Eilberg-Schwartz neglects the historical context of ancient Israel; the same can be said for the larger Greco-Roman world. A literary scholar, his acquaintance with other, contemporary societies derives from reading anthropology. As if to make a virtue out of necessity and downplay the worth of fieldwork, Eilberg-Schwartz appeals to a sophisticated understanding of current theories of knowledge, and points out that the ethnographer in the field, like all interpreters, is influenced by his or her own preconceptions and hermeneutical grid.

Nevertheless, one need not throw out the baby with the bath water. Although comparisons of ancient Israel and classical Judaism with the cultures that surrounded them may not decisively determine what the Bible and Mishnah are about, they still may provide a uniquely useful perspective. And, although field anthropologists may project their own pre-

conceptions onto the peoples they observe, Eilberg-Schwartz, far from dismissing them, develops his own theories based on their observations.

Even allowing that the comparison of remote cultures may be no less valid than the comparison of proximate ones, Eilberg-Schwartz makes definite, confining choices in selecting his anthropological parallels. In explaining the so-called “covenant between the pieces” between Abram and God in Genesis 15, for example, Eilberg-Schwartz writes that “comparative evidence suggests . . . that cutting the animal in half represents an act whereby kinship relations are severed” (p. 100). In fact, Gaster adduces even more examples from “primitive” cultures all around the world, in addition to clear analogues from the ancient Near East, in which cutting the animal functions as a threat to any party who would violate a pact.¹¹ Today’s Mafia, if one can believe the movies, employs a similar technique. This explanation admirably suits the Biblical context, in which God covenants with Abram.

At times, Eilberg-Schwartz misses appropriate anthropological parallels. For example, in contrast to most Biblicists,¹² he dissociates the law enjoining the Israelite to send away a mother bird before taking her fledglings from Deuteronomy’s concern for humaneness to animals (Deut. 22:6-7), although that concern is expressed, too, in 25:4. Eilberg-Schwartz seeks to interpret the law in the light of incest prohibitions (see above). Yet, here the following parallel from Frazer’s *Golden Bough*¹³ may be compared:

When the inhabitants of the Isle of St. Mary, to the north of Madagascar, go a-whaling, they single out the young whales for attack and “humbly beg the mother’s pardon, stating the necessity that drives them to kill her progeny, and requesting that she will be pleased to go below while the deed is doing, that her maternal feelings not be outraged by witnessing what must cause her so much uneasiness.”

Eilberg-Schwartz finds it difficult to countenance laws preventing cruelty to animals in the Torah because, after all, the Torah ordains animal sacrifices (p. 128). Here, one suspects, the interpreter is projecting the presumptions of a distinctly contemporary vegetarian agenda onto an ancient culture.

Turning to the question of reading, one is impressed by the many striking analogues and associations that Eilberg-Schwartz has pointed up. When he makes generalizing explanations and connections to exotic cultures, however, one may feel that he sometimes shaves the edges of his pieces in getting them to fit together. For example, he singles out the ass as an animal that is forbidden to be worked on the Sabbath, because he seeks to draw an analogy between it and the resident alien (*ger*). However, the Torah prohibits working all domestic animals on the Sabbath. Moreover, the patent reason that an ass may not be sacrificed is that it is forbidden food, not that it, any more than other animals, is analogous to the resident alien. Similarly, the law about yoking an ox and ass together men-

tions the ass because it and the ox were the only two domestic animals in ancient Israel that could pull a plow.

Eager to prove a point, Eilberg-Schwartz may overlook a relevant text. He argues, for example, that the Mishnah's language of classification exhibits its "debt" to the second (Yahwist) Creation account (Genesis 2-3) because it uses the idiom "call a name" (*qara' shem*; p. 228). However, the same expression is used repeatedly in the first (priestly) Creation account (Genesis 1), too.

Sometimes a simple story gets inverted. After the flood, Noah offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving. Adhering to a monolithic explanation of the purpose of sacrifice as a substitution for a human life, while most scholars would acknowledge that animal offerings served a variety of functions, Eilberg-Schwartz asserts: "Thus the institutionalization of sacrifice occurs simultaneously with God's acceptance of humanity's imperfection. Although humans deserve to be destroyed, God accepts animal sacrifices in their place" (p. 136). It will be recalled, however, that all humanity, save for Noah's immediate family, has already been destroyed, and that, at the very outset, the righteous Noah was designated for rescue.

Because Eilberg-Schwartz discusses methodology in so sophisticated and explicit a manner, one becomes especially sensitive to the inconsistencies in his methodology. In some discussions he will draw historical distinctions and limit his textual corpus to a particular literary stratum of the Bible, such as the priestly material in the Torah and such kindred works as the book of Ezekiel; in others, he will not discriminate among sources. More problematic, there is a tension in his analyses between his structuralist tendency to reconstruct an internal system of relations within the Bible — the human-animal analogy, the male-female hierarchy, the sacrificial system, the rules governing pure and tainted food — and his anti-structuralist refusal to compare the Israelite or Jewish religious system with other systems.

Eilberg-Schwartz acknowledges that his teacher, Jacob Neusner, cautions against the comparison of components of one cultural system with those of another because, as is well known, objects and norms function differently in different contexts. Recall the scene in the charming film, "The Gods Must Be Crazy," in which a Coca-Cola bottle falling from a plane into tribal Africa is put to almost every use but the one for which it was manufactured. Circumcision may serve the purpose of signifying manhood in one civilization while it serves a hygienic function elsewhere. Yet, Eilberg-Schwartz never describes any cultural system in its entirety, only selected areas of ancient Israelite, Jewish, and early Christian life.

Christianity is treated less extensively than the religions of the Hebrew Bible and classical Judaism. For this reason, it may appear that Eilberg-Schwartz gives Christianity preferential treatment. While Israelite and Jewish religions are displayed, warts and all, under the magnifying glass of the critic, early Christianity is cited for favorable comparisons.

Thus, Eilberg-Schwartz writes that “in Israelite religion, the sacrifice of an animal was a substitute for the death of humans, while in early Christianity, the crucifixion of Christ [sic] was a substitute for sacrificing animals” (p. 140). He does not consider the view that in having God-the-father sacrifice God-the-son, a human in form, Christianity momentarily revives the form of human sacrifice.¹⁴ Similarly, in describing how the Gospels and Paul “dissociat[ed] [ritual] contamination entirely from objects or uncontrollable body processes” (p. 212), Eilberg-Schwartz ignores the fact that the Christian Scriptures insist that the god-man Jesus was born immaculately, without having been “tainted” by sex, a fact that conforms to early Christian disparagement of sex even for purposes of reproduction.

Eilberg-Schwartz subtitles his book “An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Ancient Judaism,” implying, perhaps, that the various areas of life that he examines work together as a system and yield a coherent cultural view. He will enlist or highlight different principles, however, in addressing diverse matters. One might gather from this approach that there are no overriding values or beliefs that pervade the gamut of, say, Biblical culture as it is reflected in the present form of the Torah. That is not necessarily the case.

The ritual and criminal law of the Torah can, in many respects, be understood as the spelling out of implications of the two momentous stories of the Torah: Creation and the Exodus. Israel, for example, was expected to maintain boundaries in time and place and among species of animals, just as God did in creating the world in Genesis 1-2. The unholy and ritually polluted may be interpreted in this light as those people and animals that transgress such (often arbitrary) boundaries.¹⁵

Eilberg-Schwartz utilizes such a theory to explain the dietary laws of Leviticus and the prohibitions against forming hybrids. He does not apply the same theory, however, to the sources of ritual pollution. Had he done so, not only would he have demonstrated a greater coherence to Biblical law, he would perhaps have avoided a number of difficulties with which he had to contend. He might have begun his study of ritual purity and pollution in the Bible, as others have, from the universally accepted fact that the severest pollution stems from a corpse, the dead.

In my view, “discharges of blood or other bodily fluids pollute — when they flow from reproductive areas. While nothing pollutes more than the antithesis of livingness [the distinctive quality of God], [i.e.,] death, the confusion of boundaries that ensues from leaking life from the organs of life is a major source of pollution.”¹⁶ In contrast to Eilberg-Schwartz’s thesis that it is the uncontrollable that pollutes, this explains why bleeding from the nose, which is uncontrolled, does not pollute, while loss of semen, whether it is intentional or not, does.¹⁷ It explains why excrement and ear-wax, whose neutrality Eilberg-Schwartz feels obliged to rationalize, are out of the picture.

The blood lost by a mother in the act of birthing pollutes, in the view I have quoted above, because it is a drain of life fluid from a life source. Again, contrary to Eilberg-Schwartz but in conformity with the view of ritual pollution that I have summarized, an Israelite boy, emerging from a context of ritually-polluting blood, cannot be circumcised until the eighth day because he, like the priests and Tabernacle when they are first consecrated (Exodus 29:35-37), must wait out a seven-day period after emerging from their state of impurity. A mother giving birth to a girl must wait a double period before purifying herself because the girl carries the same potential of ritual pollution — menses — as the mother.

Eilberg-Schwartz prefers to see in this, as in other areas, an unseemly deprecation of women. While there is no denying the second-class social status of women in the Torah, this has nothing to do, I would maintain, with the rules concerning purity, which apply equally to men and women and, as Eilberg-Schwartz does well to stress, often fall outside an individual's control. The purity regulations separate not women from men, but Israel from the other nations, and all people from God. This point is made clear by the Torah's rhetoric in such passages as Numbers 5:2-3. There, the Israelites are commanded to expel from the camp anyone who is severely polluted by "leprosy," a pathological genital discharge, or contact with a corpse, "*whether male or female . . . so that they do not defile their camp, in which I (i.e., the Lord) dwell in their midst.*"

The book that Eilberg-Schwartz has written may raise more questions than it answers. But that is its importance. It represents a bold attempt to understand Judaism ever more thoroughly, not from an idealized theological perspective but with a view on the complexities of human needs, feelings, thoughts, and aspirations. Every topic and theory that he has touched warrants further reflection and study.

In continuing the discussion, however, it may not be productive any longer to reduce all cultures to the "savage." There are, after all, certain fundamental values by which we all view one way of life as somehow better, less "savage," than another. Eilberg-Schwartz manifests such a prejudice, i.e. seeing one way of life as superior to another, as we saw above, by regarding the culture embedded in the Torah as inhumane because it provides for animal sacrifice. And, despite his expressed antipathy to evolutionary thinking, he sees the abandonment of child sacrifice as a step in the right direction. There may be no scientific way of deciding which values are better, but most of us, and those of us professing religious belief in particular, possess a strong sense that certain values, such as the Torah's overall respect for human life, are.

NOTES

1. Eilberg-Schwartz omits reference to several anthropologists whose work is relevant to his study; among them are James Boon, Marcel Detienne, and Georges Dumézil.
2. Cf., e.g., Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Analysis of Myth," in his oft-printed

Structural Anthropology; and see Edmund Leach, *Genesis as Myth and Other Essays* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969); Edmund Leach and Alan D. Aycock, *Structuralist Interpretations of Biblical Myth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Alan W. Miller, "Claude Lévi-Strauss and Genesis 37-Exodus 20," in Ronald A. Brauner, ed., *Shiv'im* (Philadelphia: Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, 1977), pp. 21-52.

3. Cf., e.g., Gillian Feely-Harnik, "Is Historical Anthropology Possible? The Case of the Runaway Slave," in Gene M. Tucker and Douglas A. Knight, eds., *Humanizing America's Iconic Book: Society of Biblical Literature Centennial Addresses 1980* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), pp. 95-126.

4. E.g., Nathaniel Wander, "Structure, Contradiction, and 'Resolution' in Mythology: The Treatment of Women in Genesis 11-50," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 13 (1981): 75-99.

5. He cites, in particular, Bible scholars such as William F. Albright, Yehezkel Kaufmann, Helmer Ringgren, and Nahum M. Sarna.

6. One has the sense that Eilberg-Schwartz excludes historical cross-cultural comparison from consideration without really having looked into it. He displays little acquaintance with research into the cultures of, say, ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia; his bibliography includes no entries under such major authorities as John Wilson, Thorkild Jacobsen, or A. Leo Oppenheim.

7. E.g., Bertil Albrektson, *History and the Gods* (Lund: Gleerup, 1967); H.W.F. Saggs, *The Encounter with the Divine in Mesopotamia and Israel* (London: Athlone Press, 1978); and see now Peter Machinist, "The Question of Distinctiveness in Ancient Israel: An Essay," in M. Cogan and I. Eph'al, eds., *Ah, Assyria . . . : Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor*, Scripta Hierosolymitana 33 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1991), pp. 196-212.

8. The work of Robertson Smith and Frazer has been continued and refined by, in particular, Theodor H. Gaster, in such books as *The New Golden Bough* (1964) and *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), as well as in the major and in many ways still standard study of ancient Israelite culture by Johannes Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture* (1926-1940). Regrettably, Eilberg-Schwartz entirely neglects these works and overlooks, too, a large number of more recent anthropologically informed studies of the Hebrew Bible whose approach differs little in general from his own. Note, only for example, the essays cited in notes 2, 4, 15, 17.

9. See the pertinent study of P.A. Mantovani, "Circoncisi ed incirconcisi," *Henoch* 10 (1988): 51-68.

10. E.g., Jacob Milgrom, "Rationale of Cultic Law: The Case of Impurity," *Semeia* 45 (1989): 103-9; E.L. Greenstein, "Biblical Law," in Barry W. Holtz, ed., *Back to the Sources* (New York: Summit Books, 1984), pp. 83-103, esp. pp. 89-95.

11. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom*, pp. 145-48.

12. See, e.g., the commentaries on Deuteronomy by S.R. Driver (International Critical Commentary, p. 280) and Gerhard von Rad (Old Testament Library, p. 154).

13. J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, abridged edition (1963), p. 523.

14. Cf., e.g., Geza Vermes, "Redemption and Genesis xxii — The Binding of Isaac and the Sacrifice of Jesus," *Scripture and Tradition: Haggadic Studies* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973), pp. 193-227.

15. See, e.g., my "Biblical Law" (note 10 above) and "The Torah as She Is Read," *Response* 47 (Winter 1985): 17-40, revised in my *Essays on Biblical Method and Translation* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), pp. 29-51, esp. pp. 48-51. Eilberg-Schwartz, too, has been influenced by Mary Douglas, Jean Soler, and others taking a structural anthropological perspective, but he shows no acquaintance with these essays of mine.

16. Greenstein, "The Torah as She Is Read," *Essays*, p. 49.

17. Cf. also Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "Pollution, Purification, and Purgation in Biblical Israel," in C. L. Meyers and M. O'Connor, eds., *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1983), pp. 399-414.

Book Review

Between Worlds: The Life and Thought of Rabbi David ben Judah Messer Leon. By HAVA TIROSH-ROTHSCHILD. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991. viii + 385 pp.

Reviewed by MARC SAPERSTEIN

THERE ARE FEW medieval Jews about whom enough is known to justify the writing of a full biography. Even authors of highly influential works (Bahya ibn Pakuda, Judah Hasid, Moses de Leon, Gersonides) are known primarily by what they wrote, which discloses little about the details of their own lives. Scholars must be satisfied with analyses of their thought; the thinkers themselves appear as disembodied minds, leaving us little understanding of the detailed contours of a career, or the inner dynamics of a personality. The exceptions — Saadia Gaon, Moses Maimonides, Moses Nahmanides, Isaac Abravanel — were, for the most part, men who combined significant written work with positions of public responsibility, including involvement in internal communal conflicts.

David ben Judah Messer Leon (ca. 1470 – ca. 1535) belongs to this small second category. Although not a towering figure of Jewish history or thought, nor a profoundly original thinker who had major influence on subsequent generations, he was a fairly well-known rabbi and a rather prolific writer (many of his early works are no longer extant; others remain only in manuscript), who struggled with issues that seemed quite pressing in his own context. Because he was more representative of Jewish leadership than were the rare intellectual giants who transcended their particular period, his life and work are valuable reflections of an important period. Meticulously reconstructed and probingly analyzed by Hava Tirosh-Rothschild, they present a “case study of Jewish culture in Renaissance Italy,” illustrating several important issues of Jewish historical experience in Italy and the Ottoman Empire at the turn of the sixteenth century.

As has frequently been noted, a fundamental difference between medieval Jewish and Christian societies is that Christians directed their most talented individuals to the clergy, where they were expected to remain celibate, whereas Jews who excelled intellectually were expected to marry and have children. Highly talented sons of accomplished fathers suggest themselves: Hai Gaon, the son of Sherira Gaon; Abraham, the son of Moses Maimonides; Judah, the son of Samuel the Hasid; three generations of ibn Tibbon translators in Provence; three generations of ibn Shem Tovs in fifteenth-century Spain.

David ben (son of) Judah Messer Leon was born into the aristocracy of Italian Jewry. His illustrious father is described by the author as “beyond doubt the most prominent Jewish scholar in fifteenth-century Italy.” Rabbi, Aristotelian philosopher in the Averroist tradition, author of a major work on Jewish rhetoric, Judah was esteemed and honored by his Christian neighbors, awarded the title “Messer” and a doctoral degree in philosophy and medicine by the Emperor Frederick III. This included the right to treat Christian patients and to bestow doctoral degrees on Jewish students.

David reached adulthood in the year of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. Considerable attention has been paid recently to the drama of Sephardic Jewry fac-

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ing increasing persecution, expulsion, and resettlement. Despite the devastating disruptions, the Sephardim who left the Iberian peninsula were, on the whole, successful in adapting to their new homes and reconstituting their own unique ethos in new environments. Far less publicized is the response of native Jewish populations in Italy and Turkey to the influx from abroad. The Sephardim, who thought of themselves as the elite of the Jewish people, made every effort to re-establish their own traditions and their own patterns of communal life, with what some viewed as lack of respect for the local customs. Not surprisingly, the native Jews sometimes reacted with less than enthusiasm.

David's career illustrates these tensions; he is a fine representative of the non-Sephardic Jew who, living at the time of the expulsion and the rise of new Sephardic centers, vehemently resisted the growing influence of the newly resettled exiles from Spain. As Tirosh-Rothschild puts it, his work

expresses animosity toward the Sephardim and an attempt to dissociate himself from them. David considered Sephardic Jews ill-trained in *halakhah* and prone to religious laxity in general, and, throughout his life in the Ottoman Empire, [he] exhibited marked hostility toward them.

Paradigm of the achievements of Sephardic Jewry was Don Isaac Abravanel, influential courtier and prolific writer in many genres of traditional Jewish literature. David was not impressed; he saw Abravanel as arrogant, dangerously ambitious, and intellectually shallow. It was not a trifling matter to attack Abravanel in a book; the diatribe in David's writing takes on larger significance, representing a "feud between two aristocratic Jewish clans" of different backgrounds and outlooks.

Related to this issue is the matter of rabbinical authority. As did his father, Judah, David used the title "rabbi" following a formal, public act of ordination. But while the Hebrew term for this, *semikhah*, goes back to Talmudic times, the contemporary practice was actually a medieval innovation of the Ashkenazic communities. Ashkenazic immigrants brought the practice to Italy; Sephardic scholars, who used not *rav* (rabbi) but *hakham* as a title for their religious authorities, challenged the authenticity of the Ashkenazic ordination, appealing to the Talmudic principle that there can be no *semikhah* outside the land of Israel, and ridiculing it as an imitation of the Christian doctoral degree. (Tirosh-Rothschild's discussion of the problematics of this dispute should serve as a warning against the tendency, especially pronounced among Israeli writers in Hebrew, to bestow, upon every medieval Jew who wrote a book, the title "Rabbi.")

David, ordained by the head of the Paduan *yeshivah*, understood his title to confer upon him a status that was not dependent upon a specific community but was in effect wherever he was. While serving as Chief Rabbi of the Jewish community in Valona (now in Albania), he was asked to intervene in an internal conflict of the Sephardic congregations involving a break-away group. When his decision was rejected by some of the interested parties, he saw this defiance as an insult to his personal authority and the dignity of his position. The detailed account of the incident that he wrote is one of our most important sources for the dynamics of internal Jewish communal relations and conceptions of the rabbinical position. It contains a spirited defense of the Ashkenazic-Italian ordination, including the contemptuous response that, if it had really been influenced by the Christian doctoral degree, the Sephardim would have introduced it, as they were the ones who were more highly assimilated.

All of this provides a context for the central component of the book: its focus

on intellectual history. Tirosh-Rothschild situates her subject at the convergence of four forces of influence, which David attempted to mold into an integrated and coherent worldview. First, is the traditional Jewish learning of the *yeshivah* — Talmud and Jewish law — required of any rabbi.

Second, is the legacy of medieval Jewish philosophy, especially Maimonides, supplemented by the influence of medieval Christian scholasticism: the author emphasizes the impact of Thomas Aquinas on David, placing him in what has been called a "Thomistic school" in Jewish thought.

Third, is the stream of Renaissance humanism, expressed through David's deep interest in rhetoric, poetry, music, history, and classical writers, including the Church Fathers. Against those who sought to limit Jewish education to Bible, Talmud and Jewish law, he argued for a more encompassing Jewish curriculum, in which the humanities would enrich more traditional subjects. Where previous historians, such as Cecil Roth, tended to romanticize and exaggerate the intensity of Jewish participation in the Renaissance, Tirosh-Rothschild, like Arthur Lesley and Robert Bonfil, gives a nuanced analysis of the concept of "Jewish humanism" as a characterization of Jewish culture in late Renaissance Italy, presenting David, and his father, as major representatives thereof.

The fourth current of influence was the Kabbalah, making increasing inroads within the Jewish population at this time. David understood it to be an authentic rabbinic tradition, a source of truth that could be reconciled with medieval philosophy. He accomplished this task, as Tirosh-Rothschild demonstrates, through a philosophical re-interpretation of central mystical doctrines. This effort to integrate elements of various traditions into a coherent whole leads Tirosh-Rothschild to identify David with the Renaissance tendency toward syncretism, a Jewish exemplar of the Renaissance ideal *uomo universale*.

This integrating character is what the author seeks to convey by her title, *Between Worlds*. The phrase is ambiguous. Matthew Arnold described himself as "wandering between two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born," evoking the tragic situation of someone without any firm footing, alienated from familiar surroundings, unable to find a home in any direction. David ben Judah is a very different figure. When Tirosh-Rothschild describes him as having "stood between Renaissance Italy and Ottoman Turkey, . . . rabbinic Judaism and philosophy, . . . medieval scholasticism and Renaissance humanism, . . . Aristotelianism and Kabbalah, . . . Judaism and Christianity," she suggests the metaphor of a bridge, connecting familiar options rather than trying to find a way between them.

The last two chapters of the book, based on David's comprehensive theological work, *Tehillah le-David*, sometimes seem to be little more than a summary or paraphrase of it. Furthermore, the book seems to have more than its proper share of printer's errors and editorial lapses (particularly misleading is the consistent use of the word "dogmatism" where the term should have been "dogmatics," the theological discipline that investigates the fundamental and required doctrines of the faith). But Professor Tirosh-Rothschild has succeeded in bringing to life the intriguing story of an extremely talented man, confronted by dramatic and challenging shifts in Jewish society and culture. The problems that he wrestled with — relations among various groups within the Jewish community, rabbinic authority, the role of general learning and the nature of the ideal Jewish curriculum — were, after all, by no means resolved 500 years ago.

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